

# SMITH'S

1921  
CENTS

## MAGAZINE



Best  
Stories  
of the  
Month

*o. grines*

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ELECTRIFICATION is sweeping the country. In homes, factories, shops, farms, railroads, everywhere. It is fast becoming the one great source of power. Ten years from now practically everything now driven by steam, horse or water power will be controlled by electricity.

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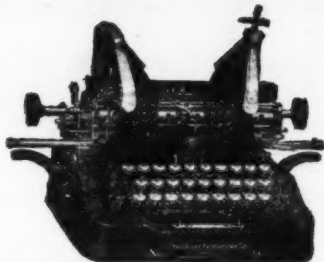
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Vol. XXXIV

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No. 2

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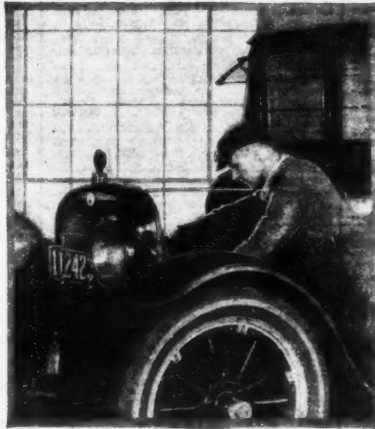
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Continued on second page following



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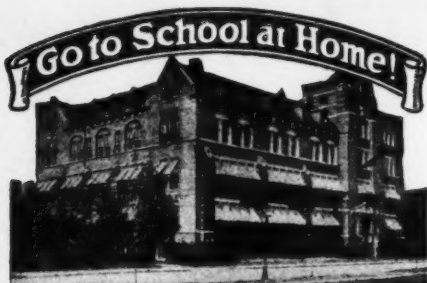
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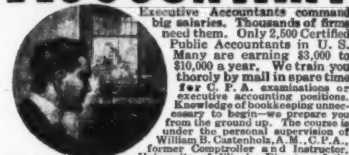
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# SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 34

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Number 2

## Married to Maisie

By Lucy Pratt

Author of "Ezekiel," "The Woman in Port," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

**Maisie represents the froth, the other woman the treasure that may be found buried deep. If you were a man, would you like being married to Maisie?**

RUSSELL WAYCOTT looked at his wife and wondered how much longer she was going to stand before the mirror. She appeared to have done all the things to her face that a human-being could think of doing, but it still continued to absorb her.

He ran a four-in-hand tie under his collar and glanced out at the mountains. Only one day more of them, and then back to the Partington Rubber Company and the stone and bricks of New York. He recoiled from the thought of it, his eyes still held by the soaring peaks. He never looked up at one of those climbing towers of earth without wanting to be on top, looking down, and his blood ran a little more warmly in his veins at what he saw now. Lord! The color! That was the beauty of staying through September. It was cold, but he liked it cold. Another big frost to-night? Undoubtedly.

His wife wheeled away from the mirror.

"Well, how do you like me, old close-mouth?" she inquired cheerfully.

He turned round and looked at her. He took her all in, from her brown

head, with its tiresome, brown cushions still adorning it on either side, to her face with its touches of light and shade all there as usual, to her bare shoulders, to her short skirts, and finally to the low, high-heeled shoes which supported her.

"Aren't you overdoing it?" he suggested drearily. "You aren't going to the opera, you know, or even to a New York dinner. You're going down to a fairly simple meal at the Cold River House, to see a few people who still happen to be here."

"Is that any reason for going down in my nightgown? You talk as if I was the only one who dressed like a civilized being. Come to, and be human, man!" She performed a brief pirouette. "Everybody's doing it—doing it—doing it!" hummed Maisie, but he interrupted her.

"If you call that dressing like a civilized being, then civilization's a rotten failure," he commented briefly.

Her short laugh contained more humor than resentment.

"Thank you for the compliment," she said. "Nothing like knowing when you've made a real hit. Cheer up, old



And then he was swinging her out from the machine, and picking her up again, and swinging her up the steps.







Tombstone! The world isn't half as black as it looks."

"There's nothing the matter with the world that I know of," he muttered. "It's the things that encumber it that are likely to give delirium to the gods."

"Thanks again!" she cheered. "You're a born flatterer, Russie, love!" Then, at the door, she glanced back. "Say, boy," she reminded, "you'll miss your fairly simple meal at the Cold River House." She went out and closed the door.

He stared indifferently at the four-in-hand in the mirror. He reflected. He was apt to reflect after a certain kind of conversation with Maisie. In fact, he was apt to reflect that he was married to her. That he had been married to her for almost two years. That he had entertained some very high ideals about women as a whole at the time he had married Maisie. The trouble seemed to be that, as a boy, he had in some way conceived the idea that they belonged to a superior order. He had known women, as a boy, that he still thought of with a thrill of veneration. And then he had married Maisie. Maisie was one of the moderns. And he was married to her. He often wondered just how it had ever come about.

He wondered, with all the blank, empty wonderment of a disillusioned man, that evening, as he watched her dance. They still danced, the handful that was left out of the summer crowd, and Maisie and Torrence Daly appeared to be always at it. Waycott had no possible objection to that. Daly's father had made a few millions out of soap, and Daly, himself, had taken to haunting Maisie's footsteps of late and attending to her needs. It meant little. It was just Maisie's "size," to flirt with any one who happened to come along. If she wanted to put in her time like that, let her do it. Waycott was certainly not aware of jealousy.

He felt bored to the point of a monstrous, sick distaste for everything about him. What had become of the old thrill? The old thrill of life itself? A wonderful expectancy used to be always with him. But that was a long time ago, when he was *young*. He felt old now, and disappointed. He was twenty-seven.

Daly and Maisie had disappeared. There were a few people left, trying in a cheerful, aimless fashion to amuse themselves. The mountain season was over, anyway. Usually they had gone home by this time. And the spirit of moving on was distinctly upon them.

Waycott strolled toward the door opening on the central hall of the building. He bowed to Miss Nonie Storms and the man who had made easy money out of Buick cars; he said something affable to Miss Susan Pelham, who apparently had brains in spite of her having caught the heated pace of the times; and then he crossed the hall and wandered into a small lounging room where there were seats and books and good, low lights.

He hesitated just beyond the threshold. A woman with a blond head and a thoughtful, mature-looking face was reading under one of the lights, and she glanced up at him with direct, wide eyes of inquiry. His momentary impression was that she might have looked like that if some one had spoken to her and she had stopped reading to listen. She might have looked like that if a child had run into the room and asked which way its mother went. Waycott's level eyes met hers. She gave him a brief smile as she became personally aware of him—and then she went on with her reading.

Waycott wheeled round to the door again and went out. He asked himself who she was. He had been there long enough to feel fairly well acquainted with everybody in the house, and yet

he knew very well that he had never seen her before. It was the twenty-eighth day of September. An unusual time for arriving at a mountain house, certainly. Especially after the week of cold and frosts that the whole country had suffered from. He pushed down the long central hall. He tried to define the brief smile which she had given him. It had been so remote, so absent, so impersonal, and yet so human, so warm, so—near.

He was outside now. He looked up at the quiet old peaks of mountains which still went climbing to the sky. A September moon had just stepped clear of one of them, and a September night wind brushed his hair like a hand. An old thrill shivered through him. He breathed deep and, with his bared head still thrown back, he drank deep, too, from a long-untasted cup. Life? Yes, it still went on, with its throbbing undercurrents and its high, golden stars above the mountaintops. It still went on, thank Heaven. Ten minutes before he hadn't believed it. By the way, who was she, anyway, with her book and her far-away eyes and her near, human smile?

He was turning to go in again when a big car came roaring softly up the driveway and stopped, panting from its run, before the house. He heard Maisie laugh.

He came back to his own particular round in life with unwilling remembrance. Maisie? Yes. And Daly, no doubt. Daly, the soap man. Yes, he drove beside her and talked down, at her, his back teeth clamping his pipe-stem with a sure, wide-mouthed grip. It was a cold night for driving, and his voice was big and breathy as it competed with the wind. He was laughing, too. And then he was swinging her out from the machine, and picking her up again, and swinging her up the steps. She wore a coat of his which had gone with the car, and he threw

off another puff or two of smoke in a climax of high spirits and jocoseness. Then he put her down upon her feet.

Waycott came round the corner of the wide piazza and stood beside them.

"What's the matter, Maisie?" he inquired. "Are you hurt?"

"Hullo, Russ! That you?" she greeted. "Hurt? Not permanently. Only a little sore at being left a widow. Where've you been since a week or two ago, if you don't mind?"

He looked her over and so did Daly, who laughed again, with his pipe still back between his teeth.

"Better shed your coverings, hadn't you?" encouraged Daly.

She stepped out of her trailing coat and stood before them in her little, short skirt and her uncovered white shoulders.

"Get into the house, Maisie," advised Waycott briefly. "You'll take cold, and it's time you were in bed. You don't seem able to walk alone. You'd better go to bed and gather up a little strength for to-morrow."

"Oh, no! I'm gaining by the minute. Bed? 'Tisn't nine o'clock, you goose!"

He opened the door, and she slipped past him. He followed her down the hall, and she chattered on in the breezy, accidental fashion which had filled awkward spaces before. When she turned into the little reading room, he still followed. It was quite empty of everything except its books and its seats and its good, low lights. Maisie tossed over the pages of a book.

"Nobody'd send in a complaint if they'd have something decent to read in here," she suggested.

He opened a magazine or two himself, and then drifted off alone again.

It was not so long after that she did go up to bed, and she went because there appeared to be nothing else to do.

"Where's Russ, anyway?" she fussed, dallying on the stairs.



"You've got clothes on the brain, man," commented Maisie.

She found him writing at the table which he had drawn out from the corner to a better light.

"Letters?" chirped Maisie affably.

"M—m." He threw her a glance and went on writing.

Maisie dropped down on the edge of the bed and yawned.

"Only one more day," she began again. "I'll be glad to get back, won't you?"

"M—m." The sound seemed to come from some far-away place where everybody agreed to everything.

Maisie dropped back to the pillow, her brown, pincushioned head resting there lightly, her eyes regarding the ceiling. But she turned them furtively in another survey of the man at the table.

She knew quite well that she couldn't

get up a quarrel with him, if she wanted to. That was the worst of it. The day seemed to have passed for that sort of thing. If you wanted to run round with men you weren't married to nowadays, nobody appeared to care. You certainly couldn't get up a scene with your husband, anyway, because he was the *last* one who cared. At least her husband was.

She swallowed thoughtfully and continued to regard the ceiling. She furtively examined him again.

Oh, she understood! She admitted it unhappily. She understood only too well that Russell Waycott had lost his interest in her. That she was only a left-over and a disappointment as far as Russell Waycott was concerned. That it was hard work to get his attention, even, much less his interest.

There was another contraction in her slim, white throat. Torrence Daly! She wished to goodness she *might* stir up a little feeling for Torrence Daly! Nobody wanted to be left out entirely, you know!

She raised herself on her elbow, a hungry challenge of helplessness behind her eyes. One of the pincushions dropped forlornly down below her ear, and she rested her head on the hand that held it.

"When'd you first find out that you were sick of me?" she inquired at that point, without introductory warning of any kind.

Waycott looked up, startled into a near and undivided attention. He saw the rumpled little figure on the bed, its head resting on its hand, its eyes fixed on him in a hard, unhappy search for something that used to be hers so surely, and which had just as surely gone. The silence between them held memories which reached back into a long and checkered chapter.

"Sick of you?" he echoed evenly now. "That's rather a bald way of putting things, isn't it?"

"Well, disappointed—then."

He considered, looking at her without flinching.

"Perhaps. I admit that it was a little disappointing to find out that you—well, that you didn't even want to live what seemed to be a normal life."

"What do you mean by a normal life?" she asked him, with an instinctive, almost unconscious mockery of his own inflection.

"A normal life?" He held resentfully to his own rendering. "Why, I suppose I mean being interested in healthy, normal things that are worth being interested in. For a woman I should think it would mean a worthwhile home, with children growing up in it, and a general interest in worthwhile things—at home and outside."

His ghost of a laugh was barely suggestive of a sneer. "That seems fairly normal to me, but I may be no judge."

She made a new hole in the pillow for her elbow.

"There's nothing the matter with that, that I know of," she agreed. "If I had children, I suppose perhaps I'd be interested in them, too. You speak as if I'd use 'em for doormats or dusters or something. Upon my word, Russ, what's the idea? I *haven't* any children, if you must know. I'm not the mother of a family, and there's no use trying to act like one."

"No, you're not," he coincided, looking from the fixed-up face to the short, rumpled little skirts. "You—a mother?" He dwelt on the word. "No, you're not, and you don't want to be. And it's far better that you shouldn't be. Women seem to prefer to make walking dolls out of themselves, nowadays, to being mothers. If they like it better, let them do it. The two parts don't seem to go together, anyhow."

"You've got clothes on the brain, man," commented Maisie easily.

"Not clothes by themselves. That's the whole point! Clothes are nothing but reflectors, anyway. And they reflect the spirit of the times like a—like a mirror that tells the truth. It's their most important duty. But, if you notice, you'll find out that there's a pretty wide choice, even in clothes, and there *are* some women with sense left, even to-day. The world's not entirely gone mad yet, though I admit it's near it."

"Oh, cheer up! Goodness! I might as well have married an undertaker and done with it."

"It would have been fully as successful an arrangement as marrying me, I guess," he muttered.

She sat up straight and slid off the bed, her familiar laugh once more in

his ears. She moved nearer to him and paused. It had been many a day since she had felt his arms. She had a hungry longing for them now.

"Oh, stop that old *writing!*" she ordered. She pushed back his table and sat lightly down upon his knee. "Don't you care!" she soothed in the old-time whisper of a voice that used to produce such revolutionary effects on him. "'S all right, Russie, boy!" She ran her fingers over his face with the barest touch.

She felt him shrink ever so slightly. There was a time when he would have gathered her up in a silent protection that would have rested her so that she might even have gone to sleep with her head against his warm, quiet body. Now he looked down on her with a conscious effort at naturalness and ease, and tried to smile.

But she wanted very desperately something that was no longer hers, and she shrank back, herself, with a cold clutch somewhere between her heart and stomach.

"You're about as affectionate as an undertaker. I'll say that for you." She slipped down to her feet and turned limply away from him. "I suppose I better go to bed," she finished faintly.

She moved away, lifting up her small hands to undo the fastenings of her dress. They trembled, the small hands, and it was hard to find the fastenings.

Her husband was trying to adjust his table again, and daubing, with a blotter, at a spot of ink which had fallen from his fountain pen.

He had an early breakfast in the morning, and Maisie stood at the window upstairs, in her rose-colored corduroy kimono, and watched him start off for his last tramp. There was something about her eager, fluttering smile, when she saw that he had turned round, that went to his heart.

"Poor little Maisie!" he mumbled.

And just then Maisie had drifted forlornly back to bed.

"I'd be different—if you cared anything—about me!" she had argued with smothered, unhappy sounds. "I might be—all right—if you cared anything!"

But by that time Waycott had quite forgotten her. His mind was focused upon one particular peak, the top of which might be reached in either of two ways. By the winding mountain road or by the steep footpath of a trail which crept up its face. He chose the winding road. He would come down by way of the trail.

He had dinner at the tiptop house. He looked round the dining room, as he came out, for the possible face of a friend. No. Yes—just out there in the hall. Brail Kenderson? Brail met him with an anxious face.

"Great morning for a climb, wasn't it?" he began. "A little too much for my wife, though. By the way, I wish you'd turned up five minutes earlier. You might have gone down with our friend, Hope Farwell. As 'tis, she's started out alone."

"Alone?" repeated Waycott vaguely. "What'd she do that for? Do I know her?"

"No, I doubt if you do. You're more or less a new one up here, you know. But she's been coming for years, and she dropped in last evening without so much as warning us. Came down from the Flume House on her way back to New York."

"You say she's gone back *alone*?"

Kenderson lowered his voice.

"You see, Daisy's had some sort of an attack," he explained. "As I said, the climb was too much for her. I don't believe it's serious. Probably only indigestion, but of course we can't take any chances. She can't go back to-day, anyhow, and naturally I've got to stay by her. Hope has to get back. Takes the New York sleeper at nine this evening. As to her going down



He was tired out with it. The wilderness, the never-ending wilderness.  
He had been fighting it so long!

alone" — Kenderson smiled—"that wouldn't trouble you, if you knew Hope. She's used to running things alone. And, as she says, she's been over the Beaver Brook trail so many times that she could do it alone and in her sleep. It's short, you know, and, between you and me, I think she was glad of an excuse for a little run by herself."

"I don't doubt," muttered Waycott thoughtfully. "However, she won't do anything to me if I happen to catch up, I suppose?"

He was on the jutting old path again. The clouds rode high above him like gay explorers of the sky, leaving the sun untouched and clear to warm the wind. They looked young and strong and eager, too.

When he first saw her she was standing still, on the path, looking down. But she heard him coming and turned round. He had known beforehand that it wouldn't frighten her. To begin with, she had seen him before—the evening before—when she had been reading. She remembered that and, as she



continued to examine his face, she smiled at him again.

He took off his cap. It had been a long time since Waycott had smiled so attractively.

"You're Miss Farwell, I imagine," he said. "My name is Waycott. Russell Waycott. Your friend Brail Kenderson had a notion that I might be better than nothing as a companion down the mountain. I doubt it, myself, but I'd like to try, if you'll let me."

His first impression was that she could laugh at him in that unruffled and quietly amused way because she was older than he was. He was quite sure that neither Maisie nor any of her friends could have met a strange man on the side of a mountain in just that fashion, anyhow.

"I'm very grateful," she encouraged, with a cheerful, rising inflection. "but Brail's idea that I needed a protector was a quaint one, too. I'm more or less accustomed to traveling the New York slums at any time of the day or night, and this sort of thing certainly isn't alarming in comparison."

With the amused crinkle still in her eye, she had let him step round her on the path, and now, as she looked down on him, he decided that it wasn't necessarily that she had lived so much longer than he had, either. She had been naturally older from the beginning. That was it! Naturally older from the day she was born.

"New York slums?" he repeated, feeling most decidedly young, himself, and most delightfully trustful. "That sounds like social-service work, or something like that!"

Her lips curved humorously.

"Yes, something like that," she agreed, with a wonderful drop of tone which made him feel about fifteen. He enjoyed being fifteen. It gave him a pleasant warmth about the heart. He had been so old of late!

"Perhaps I arrived just in time," he ventured. "Rather steeper than a New York pavement, isn't it?" He reached up a hand.

She caught it in her own quite steady one. There was an effect about it of not wanting to disappoint him. He led her on.

"This trail hasn't improved much with time, has it?" he complained, examining the growth on either side.

"Have we lost it? Never mind; we'll find it again."

"Won't you sit down and rest a minute?" he said finally, when he had floundered about and kept her waiting to no advantage at all.

"You need it more than I do," she told him, dropping easily onto one of the shelflike rocks which were everywhere, her eyes on a sudden, gorgeous expanse that flamed up through the sparsely growing trees about them. She seemed intermittently so unconscious of him! The women that he knew—

He sat down beside her, and she took off her khaki-colored hat. The hair underneath was very much the same color, and the wind laid it back with a smooth hand.

"It's too bad!" she sympathized. She looked at him with a quick assurance. "I don't mind, you know! It's taking longer to get down than it ought to, but I'm enjoying it, if you want the truth. I shall be so homesick for the mountains when I get back to New York. I wasn't made for city walls. It's wonderful to get so utterly away from the very memory of them. To be lost for a little—in the heart of things—like this."

It drifted dreamily past him. He was afraid that he might move and spoil it. For a moment he had an impression that he had been dropped down, out of a hectic, sordid world, into a healing, wind-swept paradise, with her alone.

"I'm sure it seems wonderful to

me," he agreed with hushed sounds. "If you don't get cold. It's pretty cold, you know."

He glanced at the absent face, and then at her mountain-climbing boots. They seemed like anchors of reality to him, keeping him steady.

"I wish my wife would wear heels like that," he reflected.

She turned her head. It was worth while to have been lonely forever to get a smile like that.

"She'd have to, if she did this sort of thing, wouldn't she?"

"Yes—but she doesn't."

"I know. Women are a little incomprehensible about some of the things they do and don't do nowadays. Aren't they?"

"What's the matter with them?" It was so plaintive that her eyes flickered.

"It's hard to say, isn't it?" Was it his imagination that her voice was a caress of understanding sympathy? "The postwar woman's a little difficult to analyze, isn't she?"

"That's the queer part of it," he broke out, quite suddenly on solid ground. "That's the unbelievable part of it! That this rotten, make-believe sort of existence that you find everywhere should follow the war seems beyond possibility."

She looked him over.

"Were you there?"

"Yes. I was there."

"Did you come through—unhurt?"

"No." His face grew old with memory. She watched it change. Watched all his young self-consciousness give way to age, experience, pain. "No—I waked up one day—with the guns bellying about me—and dead men and half-dead men all round me. I waked up in the blood and mud and misery—and before they found me I had plenty of time to try to think out what was wrong. How it could be! Things like that, you know!"

He realized that she was waiting.

"And I said to myself that the whole plan of the thing was wrong. And that it would always be like that—war and misery and death—men dying in the blood and the dirt like animals—it was like that and it would always be like that until the woman heart behind everything human that's born was a *working factor* in the housekeeping of this poor, staggering, old world!"

She had her eyes fixed on him very steadily, but she made no sound of any kind.

"And then I came back," he went on. "And I found out that she was going to be a working factor. They'd given her the ballot in England, and they were doing the same here. They gave it to her from the Atlantic to the Pacific. And now from the Atlantic to the Pacific we've got women stumping round on high heels, with the ballot in their hands, and with rouge and lip grease and powder on their faces, and apparently not much of anything inside their silly heads. That's what we've got now," finished Waycott cheerlessly. "It's a nice outlook, isn't it? A hopeful outlook for an advancing world!"

She was leaning toward him, her face glowing like a soft, clear light, near his.

"No, it's not all you've got," she objected slowly. "It seems to be everywhere, I know, that sort of thing. Like a disease. But there's something else besides. There's a great deal else besides."

He looked at her, all aware of her again.

"Women like you?" he breathed.

"Plenty of them, much more ready for it than I am."

She had moved back again, and he had a curious notion that he saw her across long distances that he had never traveled.

"It's perfectly natural, you know," she said, the far-away voice choosing its words with a gentle care. "Per-

fectly natural, this state of things that troubles you so. You've been in the war, and you know what it means to have the nightmare of it lifted. It's not so surprising that a—a foolish delirium should sweep over the world, with its women the dolls of the day. And it's really not so hopeless. There's froth on the ocean, you know, but the patient divers find the great ocean bed beneath buried deep with treasure. There's an unaccountable race of women abroad on the earth, but the great mother heart still beats underneath—after all."

He felt as if he were drifting slowly toward her across the distances. Then he stood up straight and ran the back of his hand across his eyes.

"Thank you," he whispered. "Thank you. I won't forget. As long as there are women like you behind it all, we must be saved—some day—all of us."

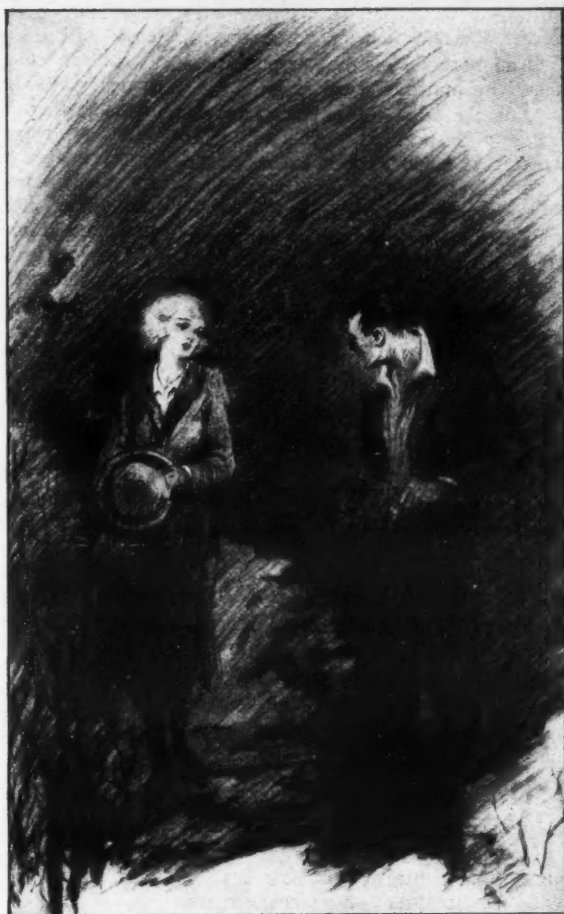
She stood up herself.

"It's freezing cold, by the way," she said, dropping a light touch on his arm.

Waycott shot a look at the sky.

"And what's more, there's a storm on the way," he added.

They were pushing blindly on through the pathless tangle of trees and



He looked at her for a long minute that reached back into the past and out into an untried future. Then he bowed his head.

rubbish, while black blankets of clouds flung themselves to the wind and icy drops blew down their faces.

"This is my fault," confessed Waycott. "But we'll get out of it—somehow! Don't you want my coat?"

"Your coat?" she objected. "That's a very altruistic offer on your part, but I certainly do not want your coat."

Button it up properly, if you don't mind. You have a wife, you know."

"I suppose *you're* some account, perhaps," he muttered bleakly.

"Not the least. I haven't any entangling alliances of any kind. The worst that could happen to me would be to miss my New York train, which I hate the thought of taking."

"There couldn't—anything happen to you," mumbled Waycott, not entirely clear as to what he meant.

"It's comforting to be accident-proof." The absent and perfectly undisturbed smile that she had given him when he had first discovered her the evening before flashed, for a moment, between them. "I suppose that's why——" But the wind picked up her voice and tossed it far away into space.

"This is hail," began Waycott. He looked at a clump of withered pines with a memory of having seen them before. He struck off to the right—and then came back again.

No, he couldn't depend on his memory, and he had gone farther than he meant to. He was more confused than ever. He was too high. No. He was too low. He went stumbling up to find her, just above there, shouting to her. *Shouting*. But the wind picked up his voice and did what it liked with it. He went crashing down again.

He came to a jolting stop, staring about him with a sick, cold face. The wind was so bitter—so wicked! It was like a black tornado, shot with ice and killing, killing cold.

He still tried to shout, but his voice was only a silly, hoarse whisper. He kept at it in the silly, hoarse whisper. And he must keep going. He knew that. If he stopped, it would be all over. His head was heavy as it hung down, and his eyes were no longer good to see with. It was too dark to see, anyway. But he must keep going.

He bumped up against a fallen tree,

and then, with a great effort, he got clear of it and slipped to the ground.

He was trying to think what had happened. His name was Russell Waycott and there had been a killing storm. He was lying there like part of the wreck and refuse, but he still lived and he must wake up. There was some one telling him that. She leaned over and made him understand.

He was on his feet, trying to think more clearly. It seemed to be getting lighter. No—it was not getting lighter, but it was light where she stood, at any rate. It was so light that he could see her far-away, untroubled smile and her windblown, yellow hair.

"You must be getting on," she told him. "You must be getting home."

He said nothing at all, himself, until she stopped beside the brook.

"Of course," he mumbled then. "Of course. Any donkey can get home, if there's a brook."

Was she laughing at him? No. She was only looking at something away off—somewhere in the distance. Then, she was leaning toward him, her face like a soft, clear light, near his own.

"She's waiting for you. There's been a bad storm—a long, long storm. There's froth on the ocean. And a tired world. But she's waiting——"

He looked at her for a long minute that reached back into the past and out into an untried future. Then he bowed his head.

"Thank you," he whispered. He ran the back of his hand across his eyes. "Thank you. I won't forget. As long as there are women like you behind it all, we must——" But his voice had trailed off, and he realized that he was quite alone beside the little icy brook.

He stood like a rock. Then he raised his arms with a great sweep, his eyes traveling far.

"Take about two hours to get down," he muttered finally. And he turned to go back to Maisie.

# A Return Ticket to Main Street

By Frank Hurburt O'Hara

ILLUSTRATED BY P. J. MONAHAN

**A model young business man takes his plunge into the Rubicon, without so much as knowing that he is on the springboard.**

YOU know what a small town is. The town Maddy Martin lived in was like the one you and I used to know. A pleasant place—parks, pavements, Rotary Club, and everything. It had a Main Street, a Maple Street, five churches, three schools, a Carnegie library, a millionaire, band concerts twice a week, and a movie house with a pipe organ. Maddy lived on Maple Street, officed on Main, had attended two of the schools and all of the churches, and was casually acquainted with the millionaire, the library, and the band's favorite selections. As for the movie house, he owned it.

That is, his mother had let him invest her little windfall, plus his savings, and the title was Maddy's. His father lent a hearty moral support. It was all that robust and optimistic gentleman had to lend. For Mr. Martin, senior, was one of those men with a genius for investing where prospects are richer than dividends. His fortune had gone into them long before. He had a various assortment of nicely printed parchments, which he referred to as his assets. Mrs. Martin and Maddy called them the family liabilities. But the Bijou was a paying business.

Maddy had his father's eye for possibilities and a knack of management all his own. He saw what kind of pictures the people liked, and supplied them. Then he perceived, ahead of his rivals, that the cinema was a civic institution, so he refurbished the old Bijou. He installed a playroom and

added a nursemaid to his matinée staff. But the pipe organ was his *pièce de résistance*. He found a woman who hadn't much technique, but who "played the pictures" with a sixth sense that was remarkable. To go downtown of an evening without looking in at the Bijou was like omitting to stop at the Canditorium for a nut sundae or a banana split. (The Canditorium adjoined the theater, and Maddy had a silent interest in it.) In a short while, then, the Bijou would have repaid the outlay, and be running to straight profit. Which is saying that young Martin had "a good thing;" and he knew it.

In fact, he was locally cited as a fine young man who *did* know a good thing—and sometimes, vaguely, the reputation bothered him. Being very young, and an example of all the virtues, both at the same time, is not without its alloy. I infer that you have been twenty-five, yourself. Possibly you were thereabouts when you made your own dive into the Rubicon. I wonder if you did it with nice calculation, or if you just shut your eyes and plunged? As for Maddy Martin, he didn't so much as know that he was on the springboard!

At nine-thirty Maddy was handing three greenbacks to Miss Sybil la Vitte. The Bijou boasted a "special added feature" by way of a vaudeville act every Saturday night, and Miss la Vitte was this week's feature.

"It's a good act, Miss Murphy," said Maddy, "and we're very well satisfied."

"Glad to hear you say that, Mr. Mar-



But when he met her again, in the King Edward lobby, and she invited him to go in to tea—"on her"—he went.

tin," punching the bills into her bead hand bag. "And I've enjoyed playing your town. I'll say it's a nice little burg."

Maddy smiled. "Only you're not crazy about the small time, eh?"

"It's a matter of taste," said Miss Sybil la Vitte—née Murphy. "Myself, I like the wide world, see? I just pick up a few hick dates in the summer. Next week it's westward-ho for mine—solid booking to the coast and back.



Well, s'long!" She turned on heels incredibly fragile for the avoirdupois they propped, then halted to inquire over her shoulder: "Ever been out there yourself?"

"N-no," admitted Maddy.

"Well, you could show 'em a few things in Los Angeles, Mr. Martin. *You know movies!*"

"Thanks," he laughed.

He listened to her smart, staccato steps tapping into the alley. "A nice little burg"—"hick dates." Huh! Even Miss la Vitte knew something of "the wide world."

He walked around front.

"How's things, Nettie?" he greeted the girl at the ticket cage.

"O. K. Packed them in twice, Maddy." (Everybody called him Maddy, of course.)

"You're a regular little manageress," he told her casually. "I suppose you could run the whole works, eh?"

"For a person who ain't crazy to get into the pictures," she chattered, "I guess I know the game from subtitles to static." She eyed the absent look on her employer's face speculatively. "You're not thinking of *letting* me, are you?"

"Oh, I'm just flattering you, Nettie!"

But he knew that to-morrow night the electroliers in the Bijou lobby would pour no soft glow upon *him*.

Now, Miss la Vitte was no siren, and what she had said, he knew, was so much "salve." But anybody can start you by saying what a little voice inside you has been whispering for a long while. The sight of a tramp steamer warping from a pier has sent many a man suddenly seeking the nether corners of the sphere. Three syllables as suddenly set an idea racing from Maddy's subconscious mind to alert awareness. Los Angeles! He ought to see what was doing at the movie capital; ought to get first-hand experience. He didn't expect to show,

but he wanted to be shown. And he was going to be. The Bijou could run all right with Jim Kendall and Nettie.

Of course, as a matter of fact, he was a trifle stale on the job, and a little bored with being a town's model of premature settled-down-ness. He had worked hard, was twenty-five, and hadn't seen the world. The tree-arched vista of Maple Street had nothing to say to him as he walked home.

Mrs. Martin was up, waiting. She was that kind of mother, like yours and mine. She folded her evening paper, took off her glasses. He dropped into the armchair opposite.

"I'm going to take a trip," he began at once.

"You ought to get out more," she approved. "You haven't been to the city in months."

He scrutinized his finger tips, hands supine. "Not Chicago. California."

Her eyes, with their warm brown a pleasant contrast to the graying hair, rounded with surprise. At the same time there was a step behind them.

"What's that?" came the large voice of Mr. Martin, senior, from the doorway. "California? That's where a young fellow ought to go. I'll go with you!"

Four eyes surveyed him with insincere disapproval. In reality, the Martins had a kind of pride in his buoyant boyishness. They didn't say so, however; it was a secret. So Mrs. Martin ignored him in her reply.

"You ought to manage it some time this winter, when the weather's so nice out there," she addressed her son.

"I'm going to take the four-fifty to-morrow afternoon," he announced. "Kendall and Nettie can take care of the Bijou, and all you and dad and Ruth will have to do is take in the profits."

"It's rather sudden, of course——"

"That's the way to do things," inter-



It was Maple Street as Maddy had given it to Lily Forsythe. Even the subtitles were familiar—his own phrasing as he had talked.

jected her husband. "Now, if I hadn't waited so long——"

They met this sally with a cordial family laugh, and Maddy wondered that his mother had kept so young looking. As he started upstairs, glancing around to where she sat by the table, he thought that the face in the pool of lamplight was not so young, after all.

For a time he lay awake on his bed under the slant roof beside the dormer

window. He had been a kid in this room, and he felt like a kid now. He was thrilled, expectant. It was as if that boy had decided to run away. He heard a car purr up to the curb, his young sister's voice saying good night to the youngster who was bringing her home from some party. **The first leaf-fall** was brittle beneath her skipping steps. He heard the closing of the door, her steps on the stairs, the soft





shutting of her bedroom door. It was a long time since he, Maddy Martin, had taken a girl home. He wasn't so young any more!

Shadows frescoed the blue-calclined wall, his old haversack hanging tan against the blue. The lake was beating a monotone beyond the apple orchard. He rolled over, to Los Angelian dreams and sleep.

Los Angeles, as everybody knows, has a lot of people who will tell you how much the film industry needs their ideas. They will also tell you, wistfully, that it is a long way between Broadway, New York, and Broadway, Los Angeles. The cause of the wistfulness is twofold: they didn't bring a return-trip ticket along with their ideas, and there are more geniuses than jobs.

The surprising thing is that Maddy got a job. But he did. He hadn't been in town twelve hours when he was on the pay roll of Flinn, the movie free lance.

If you know Los Angeles, you know Flinn. He advertises with a dash, opens up a new house on Broadway every little while—he began in the nether end of Main Street—occasionally fails, and then goes to it on a larger scale. He likes quick decisions and young blood.

Flinn took a look at young Martin, talked with him five minutes, and put him in as submanager of the newest place on Broadway. Maddy pinched himself surreptitiously, felt the pinch—he was awake all right.

Not that it was a big job. But it was just what Maddy wanted. He could see how things were being done, at the same time doing something himself. He was qualified, of course; any one who can satisfy his home folk can do the same with a larger public. He had learned to get on well with people, had

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the knack of management, and was honest and industrious. Flinn liked him. He drew a pay envelope that held an amount about equal to his share of the net earnings of the Bijou. It took this to house, dress, and feed him. Meanwhile, the Bijou would be bringing in the regular income, which was to be turned over every week to his parents, without the formality of a statement being sent to Maddy. He was free. No one pointed him out as a model young man.

The weeks slipped on. An edge of the newness wore off, he wrote shorter letters home, learned how to eat sand dabs, to dodge endless motors, to know when to carry an umbrella, to pronounce the name of the city. He was acclimated. With the newness, some of the pep wore thin—but that was the climate; and his head and notebook were filling with convertible ideas. There were times, to be sure, when he thought about the little old town "back East," and wondered if the snow was piling up along Maple Street, and hoped the winter wasn't severe on his mother and father or shrinking attendance at the Bijou; and he pictured the bushes in their yard banked with white, and his kid sister in a fur cap she wore. It seemed, all of it, the full ten map inches away.

Then he met Lillian. It was well, for promptly the old pep returned.

They met at a house on a hill—a house which looked down across a park with a lake in it, to the city beyond. Some one was at the piano, singing. Maddy was near the door, Lillian also. The night breathed fragrant through the doorway. The garden was mellow, the lake, below, iridescent with myriad reflected lights. They wandered out through the irises, for the view. They talked. He hadn't known a girl who could talk like that before. Then the rain fell, and they scurried for shelter. Halting on the veranda, she said:

"Do you know, I can't recall who you are?"

He told her. "We were introduced at the foot of the stairs by the clever lady from Baltimore."

"What a memory! But that doesn't tell me *about you*."

"It wouldn't be interesting."

"You're not a native?"

"Are there any native Californians in Los Angeles?" She laughed with him. "I'm from what you call the East," he went on. "I live in a small town that doesn't get on half the maps. It's a hick town, and I'm a hick!" He had graduated to the pinnacle of fluent small talk. "But it's a fine old town, with the funniest, most likable folks you ever knew." He elaborated. When he reached a period, she asked.

"And what do you do *here*?"

Maddy hesitated. "Well, it was by luck I got invited to-night. I'm told you 'natives' don't invite motion-picture people. I'm one of them."

Lillian laughed again, infectiously. "Pshaw! I'm almost one myself. You see, dad is in the business. Come and see us some time, won't you?"

Hereupon, they were interrupted. Leaving, said Maddy to the man who had brought him: "By the way, who is that girl—the sort of regal, good-fellow one?"

"Oh, that's Lily Forsythe. Great girl. Rich as Cræsus, or whoever the ancient profiteer was. Her father's Theron Forsythe. You know the Forsythe pictures. Most *human* stuff on the market. Their scenarios are wonders, some of 'em. Right down-to-the-ground slashes of real life."

"Oh," said Maddy. He saw the girl flying away from him on golden wings.

But when he met her again, in the King Edward lobby, and she invited him to go in to tea—"on her"—he went.

In a gray frock, the rose lining of a wide-brimmed hat sending a shimmer of color onto her face, she was lovely, and

simple, and didn't look rich and pampered at all.

"So you're working for Mr. Flinn," she remarked, slipping the lemon slice into his cup.

"I am, but I didn't say so."

"No," she smiled; "Mr. Flinn did. The fact is, I *love* the pictures, and I go everywhere. If you can't find me anywhere else, you'll catch me out on the lot, or on location, with some company—not always one of dad's, either."

"Your father is a genius, they tell me," he commented, "and whoever writes his scripts, a wizard."

"Oh, I don't know," said Lily. "But let's not talk about dad and his writers. Let's talk about you. Tell me some more about your home town and the people in it. They're adorable, at least as you tell about them."

It's surprisingly easy, isn't it, to talk about your home town when you get away from it? So, blushing a little at first, Maddy told. A regular pageant of home characters marched through his narrative, while the girl listened, her chin cupped in her hands, her eyes bright as if she saw them: Old Lem Prowd, who had deserted the Union army because he was plain scared, and then, years afterward, marched in the annual G. A. R. parade, with no one having the heart to stay him; Aunt Tibbits and her perpetual peppermints; Lutie Grammers, who hadn't spoken to Erb Grammers in fifteen years, but always bragged of him to outsiders. From these, and others, he drifted into simpler, sweeter tales of old friendships and sacrifices, until, with subduing of identities, he was relating little things about his mother, his father, and Ruth.

They were at tea a long time, and Lily at last reached for the check reluctantly. It was odd to see a girl signing like that.

"It was my invitation, you know," she anticipated his objection, "so I'm

paying. Your stories have been worth more than that. They're delicious! Why don't you write them out?"

"Me?" mocked Maddy.

"Why not? You ought to be able to string them into a scenario."

"I'm not a wizard," he laughed.

She suggested that he come to see her, and he said he would. And he did.

It was the sort of place he had often seen—on the screen: a house on South Figueroa, with palm trees and roses and all the other subtropical accessories. Inside, there were roomy rooms and a capacious fireplace that seemed built to enhance the comradely charm of Lily Forsythe—until, inevitably, Maddy saw the doughty Theron Forsythe sitting before it, his long legs sprawled to the fender. Maddy had a kind of awe for this film king, not because he was that, for he could talk business with Forsythe and learn something all the time, but, rather, because he was Lily's father.

It is obvious, of course, that about the senses of Maddy Martin a tenuous web was being woven, none the less perceptible because it was intangible, and rather the more distressing because it was impossible. He told himself that he went to the house on South Figueroa because Lily was such a stimulating, yet frankly simple, companion. No, said he to himself, there wasn't any romance about it. But just the same he knew the tempo of the little thrill at his pulse. Yet it was so ridiculously impossible that it was safe. You might let yourself dream about a girl like that as you'd daydream about anything desired but unattainable.

As for Lily, she met him on a plane of camaraderie. Sometimes they drove in her roadster, alternately chatting busily or enjoying the air in unembarrassed silences. Or they sat in favorite fireside seats and talked—chiefly, it seemed, about the Bijou investment, which she understood like a stock-

holder. He confided certain expansions he had decided upon back home, including the beginning of a chain of theaters in adjacent towns. The lengthening weeks were rapid.

Then, spring. An earlier spring, crowded with blossoms, yet not the April of home, redolent of earth and shower-washed air, and violets in ravines. A hint of something wistful, like a whisper of things half forgotten, hovered over young Martin. He wondered if it were the spring, or nostalgia, or what. And then there came a twilight when he sat with Lily Forsythe, on the rocks above the Pacific, with the Forsythe summer cottage clutching the cliffs above and the outline of Catalina Island misty on the horizon. The wind tossed her abundant hair and sent strands of it across her face, to be brushed back only to return. She sat very quiet. She seemed meditative, troubled. While she watched the water Maddy watched her, and he knew that his unrest was neither nostalgia nor the spring.

"Sometimes," she mused, "I can sit for hours and listen to those waves. Sometimes," her tone was low, "I talk to them. I've said, 'Lily Forsythe, you're a heartless little thing,' and the waves have had a comforting sort of sound, as if they answered back, with their big, bass boom, 'No-o, no-o, no-o!' Maddy, would you say, 'No?'"

"Of course!" he answered, half smiling, half puzzled.

"And you won't ever think me entirely—heartless?"

"I think you're anything but that!"

He hesitated. He wanted to say more, much more. But he had a sudden, retarding vision of this radiant girl in the small town which must be his home. She was looking at him as if she, too, had something to say.

Then she rose suddenly, her mood dropping from her like a neglected scarf.



"There's father. I can see he's going to talk Japan."

"Japan?" repeated Maddy.

"Yes. He's had an inspiration. Another one of our abrupt jaunts. He's planning to take a company to Japan this summer, and he says 'the mascot' has to go, too. Summer's a beastly time to travel."

"Oh!"

Japan—the wide world once more! How absurd he had been to try, even in whimsy, to see Lily Forsythe elsewhere!

Mr. Forsythe brought others with him, including young fellows who had motored to the shore in high-powered cars, with a plan for taking the Forsythes on to San Diego. Maddy felt vaguely out of the picture. As abruptly as he had decided to come to the coast, he knew that the time for returning East had arrived. He mentioned the fact to Lily, as she extended her hand at the trolley stop.

"Going back East so soon?" she wondered, her eyes rounding in surprise. Then, following a brief pause, quietly: "I think that's right. You ought to be starting the things we've talked of. And you'll make good at them, every one!"

It was friendly assent, even eager; but he felt a disappointment just the same.

"Remember your promise?" she added.

"Promise?"

"Not to think me—heartless."

"I won't." He managed a laugh, and just then the trolley came.

Going into Los Angeles, the car wheels seemed to be thrumming a raucous swan song. It was all over. She hadn't even guessed. She would be going to Japan soon, and before that he'd be back at the Bijou. And she had taken his announcement quite matter-of-factly. It was natural, but it hurt. Once he started to his feet with

an impulse to get off, hire an automobile, rush to her. For what? He subsided into his seat. He had seen, all the time, that he had nothing to offer Lily Forsythe. To her, their friendship had been an incident, pleasant, possibly, but impermanent.

It was dark when he reached his apartment. He crossed the room, swung open the French window, and, his hand against its sill, stood looking out over the iron balcony rail, across the housetops to the fringe of mountains against the eastern sky. He thought of Main Street, with the Bijou, and Maple Street, with the white frame house of the Martins. He was suddenly very tired and lonesome. He would like to be hurrying up the front steps of that old house, rushing through to the kitchen, and surprising his mother over the biscuits in the oven. He'd like to go, then, upstairs to the bathroom and swing on the water, both spouts, and splash the white-oilcloth walls and the blue-and-white rag rugs, whistling out of key as he splashed, and by such stages finally get to the supper table to hear all about everybody whom he knew and who knew him. That was where he belonged, in his own "little Iberian village." It was growing fast; he could be a somebody there, with warm, human blood in his veins, pumped from a human, you-and-me heart. And the Bijou, with his new ideas, might soon be netting as much as Flinn's show place on Broadway. Yet his spirits sagged. Some way, he had got to thinking of Lily Forsythe whenever he thought of his expanded business. With a wry, forced smile, he realized that he felt as he did at eleven when his scrub team lost a game; maddeningly he had wanted to cry, but couldn't because he was eleven, and a man! He was twenty-five now, and, he reflected, acting like a kid!

He turned from the window abruptly and switched on the lights.



"What's that?" came the large voice of Mr. Martin, senior, from the doorway. "California? That's where a young fellow ought to go. I'll go with you!"

Before him, on the table, was a telegram. He tore it open, read it at a glance. It was from his father:

Can get option on old opera house neighboring city. What do you think? Wire me power of attorney immediately.

He dropped the yellow slip to the table and laughed aloud. He'd have to rush home now. If his father were that busy, the Bijou needed the son right away! Well, maybe there was something practical in dad, after all. By telephone he dictated his answer to hold them off four days.

He reached for his hat, hurried out of the building, and went straight to Flinn.

"Mr. Flinn," he announced briskly, "I've got to get back East as soon as possible. How soon do you think you can fill my place?"

Flinn's eyes sparkled—a catch-and-go man, Flinn, swift to decide, startle-proof.

"In Los Angeles? Why, Martin, they're shadowing me night and day for jobs. You go ahead. Wait—tell you what I'll do. I'll ship you on to Chicago myself. Want you to take along a new picture I've just bought an interest in. Regular stuff. One of Forsythe's bell ringers, just ready for release. Want you to see it. C'm' on into the projecting room."

Maddy followed, a premonition walking with him. He seemed to know what he would see.

And, sure enough, a minute later he was staring at the pale cloth with the sensation of looking through it, across mountains, deserts, prairies, and the lake, onto Maple Street. The trees were the inevitable catalpas, to be sure, but that was a detail. Across that magic screen, to the click-click of the projector, through the dust motes of the stuffy room, went old Lem Prowd, in his unrightful uniform; Aunt Tibbits, with her lozenges; Lutie Grammers, turning an ample back on Erb Grammers to brag about him to the neighbors. There was a girl in an organdie dress, a young fellow seeing her home from a party. A fine old gentleman venturing his savings, and losing them; and a patient, lovely wife. There was, in short, with only the faces different, all the simple, life-familiar record of simple lives up and down Maple Street and Main, tied to a slender, human thread of story. It was Maple Street as Maddy had given it to Lily Forsythe. Even the subtitles were familiar—his own phrasing as he had talked. And the picture was titled "Hicks."

It was a picture to make the collar tight at your throat. Maddy's was tight at the final, homely close-up. It was *his* story, they were *his* people, and Lily Forsythe had seen them through *his* eyes.

"Well, wha' d' you think?" Flinn's voice brought him back. "Great stuff, eh? Whoever writes those scenarios for Forsythe knows *folks*."

"Yes," said Maddy, "she—does."

"Think it's a she?"

"Do you think a *man* could do that?" he evaded, adding an excuse to cover the impetuosity of his retreat.

He bounded out of the theater, sped to a public telephone. He rang long

distance, Rough Cliffs. No reply. Then she had gone on to San Diego.

He clicked down the receiver, turned, then swung back and clicked it up again. They might have the San Diego address at the house on Figueroa.

"Hello," a voice sang across the wire—Lily's!

"Hello, I thought you weren't there; I've got to see you at once," he sang back, the words tumbling together.

"What's the matter? Movies?"

"Y—yes, movies!"

"It's late," she hesitated.

"It's imperative," he returned.

"All right. Come up." The sing had left her voice.

But that didn't matter to Maddy. He hailed a taxi, and in a few minutes was facing her before the fireplace.

"I've seen it," he began directly.

"I know." She stirred the coals needlessly.

"How could you do it?"

She stared at the fire. He could see her eyelashes quiver. "I couldn't help it. I'm so awfully sorry. I tried to make *you* do it. I somehow couldn't get those people out of my mind. So—I wrote them out. I've been wanting to tell you, and started to to-day. I did tell you," her voice wavered, "that you'd say I was heartless."

He grasped the hands that were twining the beads about her neck.

"But, Lily," he cried, "you don't understand! I think it's wonderful, the way you—know them. The sympathy of the thing! Why, you actually seem to *like* them!"

"Like them?" she wondered. "I love them. They're so human, so real."

"And all the time," he exclaimed, "I thought, because you had been around so much, and seen so much—I had an idea, somehow, you mightn't understand folks like that!"

She smiled into his eyes, frankly. "Perhaps it's 'being around' so much

that makes me understand them, and—kind of envy them. When you've talked about your town, and its people——" She hesitated.

But as for Maddy, hesitation was not in his calendar now.

"Lily," he declared deliberately, "ever since I first saw you, I've liked to think of you in a nice little house in that 'hick' town of mine. I mean—I've wanted to ask you to marry me, Lily."

"I've been afraid," she said, disks of color riding rapidly up her cheeks, "that I'd never see that town or the Bijou!"

"I'm going to-morrow. We'll go together!"

"Maddy, dear," she laughed, "we may own theaters and write scenarios, but we don't *act* movies—not when we're getting married! You'll have to come back for me, before dad sails for Japan."

"I hope he sails soon," cried Maddy.

Then they sat looking into the fire, and not seeing it.

The next day sped, as such days do. There was so much to be said and thought and planned. They drove to the ocean in Lily's friendly roadster and had luncheon there, and were alternately voluble and wordless. And then, impossibly soon, they were at the station, Maddy's train was being called, and he was leading the way alertly into the train shed. He almost collided with a stoutish woman in a tight silk dress, headed streetward. She dodged sideways, then suddenly let her two suit cases thud to the platform.

"Well, my eye!" she ejaculated.

"Mister Martin, of Kalamazoo, or Keokuk, which is it?"

"Neither," he laughed. "But how are you, Miss Murph—la Vitte?"

"Look at me and ask!" she wailed wearily; then, brightening, she drawled: "But say, ain't you pretty far from home, and curfew about to ring to-night?"

"I'm on my way home now," he laughed back. "I've been taking a squint at your wide, wide world."

"Don't call it mine!" she pleaded loudly. "Gosh! I've just finished a marathon from Salt Lake City—usual Pantages jump. S-a-y, if I had a cozy front stoop, with the screen between the mosquitoes and the carpet slippers, I'd do a one-act sketch in one that'd last a lifetime."

"You're on," grinned Maddy.

"On nothing! On at the Pantages, three times a day, and then on the road again. Down on my luck, that's me! Well, kiss the first pretty girl you see in Hickville, and just for old time's sake, try to think of me. I was young and slim once, myself!"

Then, abruptly, she saw the young and slim and lovely Lily Forsythe.

"Oh, I beg your——"

"Don't apologize," laughed Maddy. "Congratulate!"

But for that there wasn't time. The long train grated under relieved brakes, and before he dashed to catch it, there was Lily.

With a sigh, Miss Sybil la Vitte—née Murphy—lifted her suit cases and trudged into the station. What she might have seen, poignantly she did not wish to see—the lingering kiss of lovers young and free and buoyant.





# The Passing Order

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "Stuff of Dreams," "The Footpath Way," etc.

The story of a broken engagement. What else could Hester do?

**M**Y dear Dolly," began Hester, her head a trifle higher than usual.

"Please don't use that ridiculous name," interrupted her fiancé, the Reverend Adolphus Benton.

"Very well, I won't. I'll never use it again!" Hester promised belligerently, head still higher, clear gray eyes flashing, and angry color rising to her cheeks. "My dear Adolphus, then. You are talking to me like your own grandfather, and like your own grandfather in a very unreasonable frame of mind. The world *do* move, and I should think that even a New England clergyman would have to move with it."

"Even a New England clergyman," said Adolphus Benton, with a heat entirely unclerical, "is not a fool. This man, Edwardes, is surely in love with you——"

"This boy, Edwardes," interrupted Hester, "is no more in love with me than with your Aunt Susan. We're working together."

"I object to that, then," snapped Adolphus, throwing reason to the winds.

"Of course you realize that you are insulting to me?" Hester's tone was threateningly sweet. "You must realize that everything you are saying is an insult. You are questioning my truthfulness, my dignity, almost every quality I should have supposed you——you thought you had found in the

woman you wanted to marry. If you think that I am a fool and a liar——"

"Don't talk like that, Hester," Adolphus struck in sharply. "You know it's pure casuistry." And, looking at her as she sat before him on a bench in one of the absurd rustic bowers which dotted the ascent from the river to her father's summer place on the top of the hill, his stern expression softened. "You are too darned attractive to be working with impressionable young men."

"Old stuff, Dolly, old stuff." This time he did not resent her use of the affectionate diminutive. "Suppose I should tell you that you were too attractive to be working with impressionable spinsters, like Miss Derwent of the altar committee, and that nice Leone Marsh person, the parish visitor? Wouldn't you feel a little insulted?"

"My profession," began the Reverend Mr. Benton, relapsing into stiffness, "necessitates——"

"So does mine," declared Miss Wilde, with chin at an angle of obstinacy.

"I think we will not compare them, our professions," Adolphus answered with dignity. "I have no desire to be arrogant, but I hardly think the calling of a clergyman and that of a designer of scenery for theatrical productions are to be compared. Besides," he went on, with a bit of professional sonorous-



ness, "even if there were no difference in the intrinsic service of the two professions, mine is the one by which our joint livelihood——"

Hester interrupted him by rising abruptly to her feet.

"How long, oh, Lord, how long?" she cried. "We've been over this a hundred times, Dolph. And at least ninety-five times you have been sensible and have said that I should pursue my business; allowing for the customary interruptions——" The shadow of an old-fashioned frown darkened his forehead at her casual, unabashed reference to the possibility of motherhood. "And now here you come to the one-hundred-and-first time using the very same tone that you used the first time! Aren't you in earnest? Are you trying to deceive me?" She looked at him, half angry, half laughing. "For I'm in earnest, and I'm not deceiving you in the very least. I mean to keep on with my work at the Theater of Art just as long as they will let me. And I mean to keep on growing so that they'll want me for ages and ages. I'm interested in my profession, I tell you. Dolph, dear, are you sure we understand each other? Are you sure we belong to the same generation? Every now and then, as I keep telling you, you talk so distressingly like your own grandfather! And I'm not like my own grandmother. I mean what I say, every word of it. I'm a product of our own times."

She was a very attractive product of her own times in her half-amused, half-irreful earnestness as she faced him. He wanted her, he did not wish to lose her, and he had a deep-seated masculine belief that time and nature would be with him. It would be they which would eventually tame her, subdue all her young rebellions, mold her into the likeness of the grandmothers from whom she felt so different.

"Of course I'm in earnest; of course I'm not deceiving you," he told her.

"I'm no frogloidyte myself, no matter what you think. Didn't I go up to the Legislature every year after my ordination until you women finally got your precious vote? What do you mean by talking to me as though I were a fossil? But there's a difference between being modern and being quite mad. I don't want you to behave like a Jane Austen heroine, but neither do I think it is fair of you to encourage that young idiot, the Edwardes boy."

"There you go again! If I encourage him at all, it is as a playwright. 'The Penguin' is going to make our little playhouse the most talked-of theater in the United States next fall! Can't you understand? Can't you see what he is like? Don't you know that he is by age and by temperament a complete egoist? I don't exist for him as a woman, but only as something to help him in his work. He's possessed by his work, by his art—don't you understand?"

"I don't see that his being a selfish young beast, even if he is, is any reason why you should waste your time and sympathy and brains upon him. Oh, confound it! Here comes the crowd back."

With noisy shrieks from the whistle, the Wilde motor boat came alongside the pier jutting out into the cove where the river flowed past the hill on its way to the sea.

"We might as well go down to meet them and help them up with wraps and blankets," said Hester resignedly.

"Yes, in a minute." He came closer to her and lowered his voice as if he thought the noisy crowd at the landing might overhear. "But first tell me that you like me, even if I am an old fogey."

He had a winning smile, and Hester's heart responded to it now with the same little somersault which had always followed its exertion upon her.

"You know I do," she said a little



rebukingly. "That's what makes me so angry with you. When you know what you must know, that I'm quite dippy about you, to go on talking like an irate lover in a mid-Victorian novel!"

"But I feel like one," he assured her, half seriously. "Please humor my weaknesses a little bit! And don't go around with that Edwardes boy as you have been. You may think I'm the most antique creature left in this age, but I assure you I'm not. I'm advanced; I'm a radical, I'm a believer in lawlessness and license, in free meat and free speech and free love, compared to three quarters of the people around here. They'll all think you're flirting with that handsome kid. Even your friend O'Gorman was watching you with distrust yesterday."

"Dear old Davie is always 'my' friend when you're cross, 'ours' when you're reasonable, and your own when you are boastful," she retorted. "Didn't you first come to Piney Crest, on your sophomore vacation, with him—the very season they took the place next? However, he is my friend, bless him! And he never looked distrustfully at me in his whole life. Come on, they're halfway up."

She held out her hand and they started for the merry-makers who were toiling up through the coarse, tufted grass of the sandy slope.

The Edwardes boy was the most conspicuous figure in the advancing group. For one thing, he alone was unencumbered. His hands were thrust deep into the pockets of his corduroy breeches. All the other men were carrying baskets or sweaters or thermos bottles, or were helping the older women up the hill. Even without that mark of distinction, however, the Edwardes boy's bright-green blazer would have made him conspicuous. Worn with a flowing necktie of rich cardinal hue, it made him riotously so. But, when all was said and done, it was the young man

himself, tall, supple, nobly shaped head thickly thatched with black hair, bronzed and chiseled features lit by brilliant dark eyes, that commanded attention. He made even the young of the oncoming party look a little drab, while David O'Gorman, plodding along behind him with a hamper in one hand, and Mrs. Wilde, so to speak, in the other, seemed positively dusty. David was only thirty-three or four, but he might as well have been one hundred and thirty-three or four when he was placed near young Neill Edwardes.

But David looked old even beside his friend Benton, old and uninteresting. Adolphus was handsome, after the style to which canonicals are becoming. He was tall, a little inclined to leanness, and with the sort of face his envying male friends tauntingly declared to be like that of the head choir boy in an Easter procession. "With that mug, Dolly," David had once told him, "there was absolutely nothing for it but that you should go into the ministry—so much sweetness and strength, and all that stuff, and a perfectly good set of features, too." Adolphus, firing a sofa pillow, had retorted that if professions were assigned by physiognomy, David should have been a miller. "Oh, well, a librarian's almost as dusty and musty," David had agreed, unruffled by criticism.

When Adolphus and his fiancée had reached the party, Hester relieved David of her mother, and bent her head to that little lady's account of the sail and the lunch on Dan's Island, out beyond the mouth of the river. But she was not allowed to proceed very far. Neill Edwardes promptly attached himself to Hester on the other side, and began to proclaim his discovery that the "set for the second scene in act three need be nothing more than a background in purplish blues."

"Neill thinks there's nothing in the world except his old play," said Hester's

flapper sister, Molly, in frank disgust. "He's no good. We're never going to ask him on anything again unless you come along, too, Hester."

But Hester appeared as deeply interested in the set for the second scene in act three as young Edwardes himself. Adolphus Benton's lips closed in a thin line as he saw the immediateness of her response to the young playwright. All the Puritan, all the possessor in him, came to his face. David, also looking at them through his big-lensed glasses, half smiled. They were so beautifully alive, the pair of them!

"I could have shown you exactly what I mean if you'd only gone out with us this morning," complained young Edwardes, throwing himself into the most comfortable of the wicker chairs upon the red-tiled piazza. "Why didn't you come? There are some rocks down there that gave me an idea. You'd have seen it in a minute. You ought to have been there."

"You know Hester is something besides a scene-shifter," Adolphus mentioned challengingly. The challenge was for the girl with her look of excited, absorbed interest, as well as for the unabashed egotist of a playwright. He stood back of the swinging seat into which she had dropped, his hand upon it, near her shoulder. Young Edwardes looked up at him with the air of having entirely forgotten his existence and of having failed to catch the meaning of a trivial and unnecessary noise.

"Huh? Oh, yes, I dare say." The content of Adolphus' remark had finally obtained right of way over the mental tracks to his understanding. "I dare say." But that was all of it. He turned back to Hester. "I say!" he went on. "Couldn't you go out there with me? It isn't more than an hour's sail. I want you to see exactly what I mean. Of course the rocks are gray and the vegetation, what there is of it, is green; but it's with stormy blues and purples

that you could get that impression of loneliness, of bareness— Will you come?"

"You aren't suggesting this pleasant little excursion for this afternoon, are you, Edwardes?" said Adolphus sharply.

"You might let me decide myself what I wish to do, Adolphus," Hester interrupted, sharp in her turn.

"Well, I'm going away to-morrow." Neill Edwardes stated the case dispassionately. "If she doesn't go this afternoon, she won't see what I meant this summer; and next summer will be a little late to be any good for 'The Penguin.'" He seemed to think the matter quite settled.

"It isn't more than an hour-and-a-half run down to Dan's Island," Hester deliberated, looking at the watch in the leather band about her wrist. "It's nearly four. We could——"

"Oh, I say! If we could get a bit of late-afternoon light on the place I mean, we'd be made!" cried the author of "The Penguin."

"There's the affair at the clubhouse to-night," Adolphus reminded the girl, his voice warningly even.

"That isn't until nine o'clock," retorted Hester. "Come on, Neill, I'm with you." She sprang to her feet. "Will you come along, Dolly?" she asked.

"No, thank you," he answered angrily. "You know that I'm preaching at St. Anne's Sunday morning, and that I have to work on my sermon this afternoon, since I didn't do it this morning. May I have just a word with you, alone"—he glared angrily at the serenely indifferent Edwardes—"before you set off on this wild-goose expedition?"

"Certainly," Hester answered with dignity. They withdrew to the opposite end of the big piazza.

"After what I've said to you I can't understand your doing this, Hester."

He was agitated and angry. "You stayed home with me this morning at my request. It's been almost my only chance to see you alone since that insufferable fellow came. And now—and now—you're giving him exactly the same privilege—even more of a privilege—of seeing you alone, of—of— You aren't treating me fairly. You're going off alone with him to that uninhabited island. You're encouraging him, you're making talk, you're flirting outrageously, and you know it!"

She looked at him indignantly, haughtily. Then, without answer, she turned from him and called to Neill, idly awaiting the outcome of the colloquy at the other end of the piazza.

"I'll be down in a minute, Neill. I'm just going in for a coat."

Adolphus went up to his room determined to leave the Wilde cottage at once. He was, he told himself as he had already told Hester, no troglodyte, but he was hanged—indeed, he was damned, in spite of his cloth—if he was going to submit to this sort of thing from the girl whom he was to marry! Shreds from St. Paul in regard to the subjection of wives to their husbands floated comfortably among his angry thoughts. He was a modern, but he had not thrown common sense overboard; and he was not to be hoodwinked into believing a brazen flirtation a business partnership. He began emptying his bureau drawers.

Then he remembered that he was to preach at St. Anne's on Sunday morning. It was quite within the range of possibilities that the bishop might come over from North East. He hesitated, and after an instant began returning his clothing to the bureau. After all, he hoped he had sufficient personality to make a rebuke to Hester as effective while he was present as his absence could make it! He would be very remote with her all the evening, giving her no chance to express repentance,

to make explanations. Later, after the amateur performance at the clubhouse, he would walk home with her in the late, misty moonlight and would talk to her seriously—kindly, understandingly, but firmly.

There was a knock at the door. He opened it to David, who looked a little worried.

"Did I see Hester starting off with Neill Edwardes?" he asked. "I thought I saw them down at the pier. Hope they're not bound for Dan's Island to get that effect Edwardes kept raving about."

"That's just what they are doing, though," answered Adolphus.

"Oh, well, I dare say it will be all right."

"What on earth are you talking about, Davie? What is it to you? I admit that I'm pretty well annoyed by it myself, but why you—"

"What are you talking about yourself?" demanded David. "I don't want Hester to have an ugly time getting off that island. You haven't got any monopoly of interest in her welfare, have you?"

"I don't know what you mean. I'm annoyed with Hester for letting that young fool absorb so much of her time. People will misunderstand it." His tone put him far outside the circle of those who could misunderstand; he was merely concerned for Hester's standing in her little world.

"Oh, that!" David dismissed something entirely negligible. "But you know—no, you don't either! You haven't summered around here for a thousand years like the Wildes and our family. However, Hester has, and if she isn't too much absorbed in scenic effects, she'll remember and get off in time. You know, after the tide is half-way out, there's no getting away from Dan's Island. There's only the one landing place, anyway. However, she'll remember all right."

Raising himself to his full, loose-jointed, awkward height, David seemed to dismiss his anxiety and to return to his normal state of contented belief in Hester.

Every one agreed at dinner that it would have been silly to expect Hester and Neill back so early. They made mathematical calculations—it took a good hour and a half to run out to the island, with all the circumstances favorable; it would take a little longer to run back against the outgoing tide. And by the time the young people had dropped anchor, had climbed over into the rowboat, and had made their twisted way among the rocks which almost hemmed in the only landing cove on the bleak, rough-toothed island, another fifteen minutes would be gone. Oh, it would have been ridiculous to expect them home for dinner.

No one was seriously alarmed, Adolphus least of all, when they had not returned in time to go over to the clubhouse. He grew more icily angry minute by minute. Mrs. Wilde left housewifely instructions about keeping something warm for them to eat when they came in, and Molly took advantage of the unusual opportunity to borrow Hester's jade beads. David O'Gorman, crossing from his mother's cottage to the Wildes', and attaching himself to their party according to his custom, expressed no further anxiety as to time and tide. Adolphus laid valiant restraint upon himself in the matter of expression, and no one could guess the bitter words he was rehearsing for Hester's hearing when she should return.

The affair at the clubhouse proceeded with the usual amateur delays. It was eleven o'clock before the final curtain fell and the final spatter of neighborly applause subsided. Hester and Neill had not come in. At the conclusion of the play, Mrs. Wilde turned to Adolphus, seated beside her. At

sight of the white rigidity of his face, she schooled her own looks and smiled, banishing anxiety.

"They were too tired to take the trouble to dress and come up here after they got home," she assured him chirpily. "Besides, it's the sort of thing neither of them is interested in—just this old-fashioned, amateur dramatic stuff. But I think I'll go home now. Tell Molly not to stay too late dancing, will you, please? I want her home by midnight. I'll tell Mrs. O'Gorman to oversee her—she's staying. Why, Adolphus, you aren't worried, are you?"

"Not in the least," replied Adolphus, very distinctly. "Hester is a perfectly good waterwoman. She's as much at home in a motor boat as on her own piazza. She knows this river and the coast as well as if she had set lobster pots for a living for fifty years. I'm not in the least worried. If she isn't at home, it's because she didn't care to come; it's because she was too much interested in what she was doing to note the flight of time."

"Why, Adolphus!" Mrs. Wilde's voice was flat with half a dozen mutually antagonistic impulses. Then she saw Mrs. O'Gorman, large and good-natured, bearing down upon them, and she turned to her in relief.

When, a little after midnight, Adolphus dutifully escorted the protesting and reluctant Molly to her home, Mrs. Wilde met them at the door. Her soft little face was broken into a hundred lines of anxiety.

"They haven't come, Dolph," she said. "They haven't come."

Every one had taken the return of the dramatists as matter-of-factly as possible. This was due to every one's feeling that the situation was anything but a matter-of-fact one for Adolphus Benton. He alone of the families in the Wilde and O'Gorman houses had professed himself not in the least anx-

ious. He had worn a set, tolerant smile while Mrs. Wilde talked of the possibility of engine trouble, and demanded of Molly whether there was plenty of gas aboard *The Junebug*. Molly knew nothing whatever about that, and he, Adolphus, had said, white-lipped and sneering:

"Hester's too experienced a skipper to run short of fuel. She's all right. She'll turn up in the morning, and I advise you all to follow my example—to go to bed and get some sleep."

But he had delayed to listen, though still contemptuously, while David had vainly tried to rouse by telephone some of the sleeping little settlements down the river, and had talked with a dunder-headed night clerk at the big hotel out on the point. He had shrugged and had said, "Why bother? They're all right. Hester knows her way about."

David O'Gorman, turning murderously upon him, had had a sudden sight of what lay beneath the sneer—the almost unbearable pain compounded of wounded vanity and wounded love, and stark, ugly jealousy. He turned, pityingly, from the other man to console Mrs. Wilde, grown indignant and panicky. Adolphus, as good as his word, had taken himself off to his room.

Before four o'clock, when the world was emerging palely pearl from its wrappings of darkness, David had disappeared from the cottage. A couple of hours later he had been with the wanderers as they came up the hill in the dew-glittering beauty of day. He explained that, at the first glimmer of light, he had taken his brother's boat and had sailed down the river on a searching expedition.

"A gasoline engine's a tricky thing," he told them all, a little too volubly. "You never can be sure of one. I had a vision of Hester and the kid here drifting out to sea. I never was gladder to see anything in my life than *The*

*Junebug* cutting out from behind Lee's Landing——" He broke off and looked expectantly at Adolphus.

But Adolphus had not joined in the paean of rejoicing. He had merely smiled his hateful smile. And when Hester had begun her story of a tide that had receded too far for them to leave the island the night before, he had cut her short.

"I was not worried, not in the least," he said. "I was quite sure that it would be that way."

Neill Edwardes, after a few impatient expressions of regret at the occurrence—his air was one of boredom with people who made such a hullabaloo over nothing—had launched into quite an effective description of a late moonrise beyond a rocky promontory. Every one, even Hester, seemed to find his enthusiasm ill timed. And by and by, every one, in obedience to a very definite thought wave emanating from the young clergyman, had drifted away and had left him and the girl face to face.

"When," began Adolphus immediately, in a curiously dry voice and with careful absence of expression, "do you and Edwardes expect to be married?"

Hester looked at him for a long second. A great wave of color, whether of shame or of anger one could not have told, crept slowly up her neck and face. But she spoke gently.

"Dolph, I can't tell you how sorry I am about this. I would not have had it happen for worlds. It was my fault. I had no business to start off with Neill at that time in the afternoon. I suppose I was a little angry with you. That was partly what made me go. You see, dear"—she looked at him appealingly, but his rigid face did not melt—"you make me feel obliged to show my independence sometimes, and sometimes I do it foolishly. But, too, I was interested. I really wanted to see what Neill thought he had found. We



have had such a lot of trouble about the set for that scene."

She waited, but there was no word from him.

"Still, I know I ought not to have gone," she resumed. "It's perfectly ridiculous for a woman who has summered on the coast for twenty-seven years to say she didn't know all about the tides at Dan's Island. It's perfectly foolish for her to say that she doesn't reckon, every day of her life, with the tides as she does with sunrise and sunset. I did know, perfectly. But I didn't think. I knew it was dead low by eight o'clock, and that we'd have to get *The Junebug* off at least an hour and a half earlier. I knew it with my mind, but I wasn't thinking about tides. I was thinking about scenery. We got caught. I had a miserable night, imagining how miserable you would be—"

She stopped abruptly, for he had laughed, and his laugh was ugly, deriding all that she had said.

"I was asking you," he said, elaborately detached, "how soon you and young Edwardes expect to be married. Of course you realize that it is the only possible thing after an episode like this. Edwardes may not realize it—he seems ignorant of a great many things. But I dare say your father—and even I—"

"Adolphus!" Her interruption was a warning and a prayer, but he did not heed it.

"After all, irresponsible and generally bizarre as you—what shall I call him?—your young—friend—is, I suppose he won't have any real objection to doing the only decent, honorable thing left for him to do. You're not ineligible as a wife—as his wife, at any rate—and, although I suppose he belongs to the new school that escapes the marriage bond as long as possible, he probably also regards it too lightly to care much whether he escapes it or not."

She opened her lips to answer him. Her eyes were blazing, her bosom heaving. But she laid great restraint upon herself. When at last she spoke it was in a very gentle voice.

"Adolphus, I have always meant it when I said that I—that I loved you. Have you not meant it when you said that to me?"

"We won't talk about that," he answered.

"Do you mean to tell me that an accident, even if it was due to my stupidity or willfulness, could make you stop loving me, stop believing in me? Why, Dolph, I'm Hester. You know me. You know exactly the person I am. Please, please, let us not make a silly theatrical affair of this! You know perfectly well that I'm not ever so remotely in love with Neill Edwardes. I've told you so. You know that he isn't in love with me—I've told you that. This is just you and I—just you and I. You must see it—you must see that nothing else matters but whether we love each other and believe each other."

"Do you mean to tell me—I ask because I'm interested—that you think you can go about spending the night alone with various young men—"

"You had better stop," she interrupted him.

"No, I had better go on. I'm interested. Do you really think that you can indulge in escapades of this kind and not pay for them at all? You've spent the night on an island with a young man whose association with you, I, your affianced husband, had already forbidden—that is, disapproved. Surely you don't expect to—to—oh, to get away with this sort of thing? Edwardes may, but surely *you* don't!"

"You're quite sure that is the way you feel about it?" She gave him one more chance.

"Quite sure."

She drew her engagement ring from her finger. She laid it on the table.



"It is a good thing we found each other out in time," she said. "Always at the bottom of my mind was a fear that it was the form of things and not the reality of them that mattered to you. But I wouldn't believe it—I wouldn't!" She turned toward the door.

Molly, a young tempest in pink gingham, precipitated herself into the room.

"Why didn't you tell it all?" she demanded indignantly. "Why didn't you tell us that you had seen Bob Golden, and that the Bangor Boy Scouts were camping down there, and that you saw their fire and they took you in for the night? If I'd known that they were camping there yesterday——"

"If you'd known it yesterday, a great many things that have happened wouldn't have happened. But you didn't know it yesterday, neither did I, neither did any of us. And I'm glad."

"How did you find it out, Molly?" asked Adolphus thickly.

"Oh, Neill just mentioned it, as casually as you please. Seemed to think it was more important about some old stage scenery than that they had had supper and a comfortable night. Don't you just love to sleep on balsam? Did Bob Golden——"

Her mother called her from the room. Adolphus came toward Hester, the hoop of sapphires in his hand.

"Please, please, Hester——" He held it out toward her, his face eloquent with emotion.

But hers was stern and sad as she shook her head.

"No, Dolph," she answered. "All the boys in Maine—what difference could they make? It was between you and me."

She went out of the room, and by and by they heard him going rather heavily up the stairs.

He preached a very moving sermon at St. Anne's on Sunday morning. His

text was "Things That Are of Good Repute." The people who heard him were a little astonished at the insight and liberality of his views. The bishop was there. After the services he bore his young brother, who was leaving the next day, off for a conference.

Hester and David did not hear the sermon. They were resting after a tramp through the Ten Mile Wood back of the summer settlement. Hester's face was pale and ravaged by suffering. Yet it wore, too, a look of release.

"It's queer," she confided to David. "He thinks I'm angry and unforgiving. I'm not angry—I'm only sorry—and bruised. The truth is that I see us, him and me, the way we are, at last. I mean, at least I think I mean, that I care about the reality of things, and do not care at all, perhaps not even enough, about their appearance. While he—poor Dolph!" Then she turned her brooding eyes away from the horizon and bent them upon her old friend. "Why didn't you tell me he was like that in the beginning?" she demanded. "You'd have saved everybody a lot of pain."

"A few doses of pain aren't so bad for people," said David philosophically. "And—and—good Lord, child! I was the last man in the world who could have told you anything against Dolph when you began to fall in love with him."

"I don't see why. You're my oldest friend. You're one of his oldest friends. You brought him here. I don't see why."

"Don't you?" David's voice roughened. His face, as he turned toward her, was a little distorted by an emotion she had never seen before on those dear and familiar features.

"Why, Davie! Why, Davie!" she faltered.

# Jimmy Greer Butts In.

By Sheldon Wills

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

"Then be a goat!" said his ambitious little wife. "I'd rather they'd think I was a goat than not to think of me at all. I'd keep on butting in until I knocked something over!" And Jimmy Greer, forthwith, butted in.

IT was early March in the Santa Clara valley. The exotic fragrance of the flowering prune trees, which spread like a sea of blossomed snow, tinged the still air with a delicate, lingering perfume.

Jimmy Greer, finishing his dinner out on the tiny, glass-walled porch of the little white bungalow perched upon the rounded breast of one of the green foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, drank in the blossoming fragrance with deep inhalations.

As he leaned back in his chair with that feeling of satisfaction and peace with the world only engendered by the consumption of innumerable pieces of young chicken, Maryland fried, topped off by a dessert of frozen peaches, buried under a mountainous snowdrift of whipped cream, Mrs. Jimmy leaned forward and fixed him with a severe eye.

"James Greer, I don't believe you even realize it," she said accusingly.

"Huh? Realize what?" answered Jimmy, dropping a cube of sugar in his final cup of amber brew.

"That you're forty years old to-day and have just finished eating your birthday dinner!" Mrs. Jimmy's tones were tinged with that exasperated resignation which a woman always feels for a man's frailty in remembering birthdays and anniversaries.

Greer smiled across the table at the flushed face of the little woman opposite with amused tolerance.

3—Smi.

"The dinner was a dream," he complimented gallantly. "As to the birthday, I admit it is not a fact of which I continually remind myself. When a man reaches forty, my dear, he just naturally begins to forget birthdays. They are too suggestive of approaching age," he concluded somewhat ruefully.

"That's just it, Jimmy. You *must* think of it. Why, in another ten years you'll be fifty years old! Fifty years old!" repeated Mrs. Jimmy, round-eyed at the thought. "If you don't do something now——"

Greer looked away and squirmed somewhat uneasily.

"Oh, come, Honey! We haven't starved to death yet." And he complacently surveyed the well-appointed table between them.

His wife left the table and went to the edge of the porch. Lights were beginning to twinkle one by one here and there in the ranch houses below and, with the chilling of the evening air, the fragrance of the blossoms came up with increased insistence.

"No, we haven't starved," she said slowly, looking out over the valley. "But I'm not thinking of just eating and drinking. It's not the money alone." She turned and faced him, leaning against a porch pillar. "It's *you*, Jimmy Greer. I don't want you to get sidetracked and think you can't get any farther. I want you to be a big man with the Consolidated Fruit Growers."



"Jimmy Greer, I don't believe you even realize it," she said accusingly. "That you're forty years old to-day and have just finished eating your birthday dinner!"

He shrugged and stirred his coffee with restrained impatience.

"You don't suppose I stay chief clerk in the sales department from choice, do you?" he protested indignantly. "But until somebody dies, I've reached my limit."

"Limit nothing!" retorted Mrs. Jimmy. "I know it's a hard thing to push yourself forward in a big corporation, but other men do it. At least, there's one thing you can do."

"What?" asked Jimmy belligerently. "You can make yourself ready for

the opportunity when it does come, or even make your own opportunity. If you stay hunched down over your own little desk all the time, or hide away in some filing case, you'll stay there until they dust you out some morning in a general office cleaning. Let them know you're alive!"

"But, great Scott, Honey! What can I do? Too much push gets a man in wrong. They think he's butting in—making a goat of himself——"

"Then be a goat!" said Honey impatiently. "I'd rather they'd think I was a goat than not to think of me at all. I'd keep on butting in until I knocked something over!"

Jimmy Greer considered this startling and somewhat revolutionary remark in silence. He had never thought of the subject from this angle. He had, however, in the past, made several attempts to let the higher-ups in the Consolidated know he was on the pay roll.

On one or two occasions he had made a suggestion to Hatcher, the sales manager, regarding the marketing of the peach crop. Hatcher had listened rather unsympathetically. "Uh-huh!" he remarked carelessly, and apparently forgot the subject.

Once, Greer had actually invaded the private office with a plan he had carefully worked out concerning export business, but Freylinghausen, busy with his papers, had actually snorted. "All right, Greer, just leave your data on the desk, and I'll look it over some time." That had been his contribution to Jimmy's budding hopes.

Fat chance of ever getting up in an organization whose executives received your ideas in that manner. Honey didn't know how cold-blooded a big office really was. Still, that idea of hers about his being forgotten made him wince. Forty years old, too, and with all this talk about only young men being wanted. In another ten years——

Thoughtfully he sipped his coffee, unmindful of its chill. Looking across the porch, he met Mrs. Jimmy's gaze with a nod.

"Guess you're right, Honey. I'll have to step on the throttle from now on. Three thousand a year's not so bad, but——" He inhaled the fragrance of the blossoms deeply and, rising, joined his wife. Slipping his arm about her shoulders, they stood for a moment looking across the shadowy valley. Below, to the west, the lights of San José winked and twinkled like so many fireflies and, faintly outlined beyond, the dim, purple shadow of Mt. Hamilton bulked irregularly.

"Grand night, Honey." Then as she shivered slightly at the cool crispness of the air, he drew her within. "Beat you a game of rummy before going to bed."

Greer had one quality which offset many weaknesses. When he made up his mind to do a thing he stuck to it. So, as he sat at his desk on the morning following his birthday dinner and reviewed his situation, he resolved upon a new program.

"I'm going to be a goat," he declared to himself. "I'm going to butt in every chance I get, and if the chance don't happen, by gorry, I'll make it!"

But Jimmy Greer's experience in the sales department had taught him diplomacy. There was to be no crude butting in; no mere lowering of the head and butting just for the sake of butting. He was going to have an object in sight before he hunched himself for an effort. First and foremost, he decided, the most essential thing was to know all there was to learn about the fruit-packing game, so, just before the noon hour, he strolled over to George Weston's office. Weston had charge of the Consolidated's packing plants.

"George, how are prunes processed?"

Weston, examining a box of newly packed apricots, looked up in surprise.

"What're you giving me?"

"Giving! I'm asking. How are prunes processed? What do you do to make 'em so nice and black and shiny?"

"Mean to tell me you've been in this game as long as you have and don't know how prunes are packed?" Weston demanded.

"Oh, of course, I've watched it done! I know in a general way, but I want to learn the details."

"What's on your mind, Greer?"

"I'm being a goat," said Jimmy promptly. "I'm butting in to try and learn something about this business besides the names of brokers and how to make out a bill of lading."

"Well, you've got a man-size job on your hands." Weston gathered a handful of prunes from a near-by box and, carefully selecting one from the lot, held it up for Jimmy's inspection.

"In the first place," he began, "you know prunes are not picked from the trees, as most people imagine. They're picked from the ground after they fall, which insures their having the full sugar content. Then they're run through the 'dipper' and——"

"Yes, but that's the rancher's part of the work," broke in Greer. "I'm interested in our end of it."

"Right! But if you are going to learn the packing end, and learn it from me, you're going right back to the beginning," said Weston shortly. "If you have an hour or two to spare this afternoon, I'll take you down to one of the plants."

"I'll be an hour late to-morrow night," said Jimmy, at the close of the evening rummy game, in which Mrs. Jimmy had scored heavily against an obvious preoccupation. "I've joined a new lodge," he continued, with a twinkle in his eye; "the B. I. E. O."

Mrs. Jimmy gathered up the cards with a groan.

"James Greer, if you mean to tell me you've joined another lodge, I'll—I'll—— The B. I. E. O.? What does that stand for?"

"The great and glorious brotherhood of Butt In Every Opportunity," said Jimmy, his twinkle changing to a smile. "I've gone and done it. From now on I'm a real butting goat, with sharpened horns."

"Jimmy!"

"That's what. And my first butting in is to spend an hour at one of the plants after the office closes, learning the packing game from start to a finish."

Jimmy Greer was as good as his word. He and old Frank Crane, the superintendent of the plant, took a fancy to each other, and Jimmy saw how the prunes went through the big graders, which classified them as to size; saw them wheeled out from the huge bins in big barrows and "steamed" until the heat reached the pit, sterilizing and softening them and giving them that familiar black, shiny appearance.

The work fascinated him, and he did not confine himself to questions and merely watching the other fellow do it. Jimmy Greer took off his coat and his white collar, put on a smock, and went through every operation of the packing plant, from receiving the fruit to stenciling the boxes and trucking them out to the waiting freight cars.

Outside of Weston, perhaps, no one in the office seemed to take any perceptible interest in his attempt to learn the fruit-packing game. Hatcher had merely grunted another "Uh-huh," and Freylinghausen merely raised his heavy, overhanging brows when Weston volunteered the information.

But, to his own surprise, Greer found that the time spent down at the packing plant was giving him a zest for the sales end of the business he had never thought possible. It was not merely



so many cars of forty-fifty prunes now; not merely so many tons of "fancy" or "extra-fancy" apricots; no longer was it just dried fruit he was handling.

He was selling California valleys in a sea of white blossoms; the fruit trees themselves, burdened with globes of golden-yellow apricots and pink-cheeked, yellow peaches, or bending under the purple bloom of the ripening prune. He was selling his vision of the slender, nimble fingers of sun-browned "Portygees," Italians, and the slower fingers of the Americans as their possessors knelt beside the lug boxes under the prune trees, or carefully lifted the ripened apricots and peaches from the twigs to which they clung. No longer was it merely dried fruit that Jimmy Greer was selling; he was selling knowledge and romance along with it.

Once, Freylinghausen, in passing, had asked him about a shipment of dried peaches to Winnipeg, and Greer, answering promptly, had volunteered the information that the fruit was an unusually fine pack. The old man had contented himself with a "That so?" and went on, leaving Jimmy to wonder if the effort of broadening his knowl-



"Mean to tell me that you've been in this game as long as you have and don't know how prunes are packed?" Weston demanded.

edge of the business was worth while, after all.

There was a surplus of apricots that season, too, so Jimmy, butting in again, suggested to Hatcher that, with the addition of some machinery in one of the packing plants, it would be possible to convert part of this surplus into jam.

"Uh-huh!" said Hatcher. "It might."

"Uh-huh" seemed to be the extent of Hatcher's vocabulary, so far as Greer was concerned, and Jimmy felt an insane desire to tweak his nose or punch him in the middle to see if he couldn't be made to say something else; but a



few days later Hatcher brought up the subject himself.

"We're going to try out that idea of yours, Greer, about making jam."

Greer's evenings at home were not spent now in playing rummy with Mrs. Jimmy. He was too busy poring over geographies and maps and shipping routes and reading up on the characteristics of different nationalities, as affecting export business.

"Germany was the biggest consumer of dried fruit," he told Mrs. Jimmy one evening. "The war knocked that out, but she'll come back. When Russia settles down, though, and Poland is stabilized, there'll be a market worth while."

"Well, you had better make a big hit with your home market, before you do anything with the Russians or Poles," retorted Mrs. Jimmy, who was as interested in the fruit business as Jimmy himself. "Why doesn't the Consolidated put out dried fruit in packages?"

"What for?"

"Because no woman likes to buy dried fruit that is handled by everybody. It gathers dust and flies, too, in those open boxes. A one-pound or a five-pound package would outsell loose fruit, three to one."

"H'm-mm! Bright idea, Honey. bright idea! I'll ask Weston to give you a job in the packing department."

"You can laugh, if you want to, but it's the truth," insisted Mrs. Jimmy.

Although he spoke jokingly, the idea of a small, family package of dried fruit stuck—and, butting in once more, Greer broached the subject to Freylinghausen.

"We've thought of that, Greer, but the trade's used to twenty-five, and fifty-pound boxes, and, besides, it is difficult to get a package to prevent the fruit drying out."

"Then give the trade something different," urged Greer. "Try it out once

and see how it takes to it. I'll get busy on finding the right kind of a package. Why, my wife says—" And Jimmy quoted arguments to which even hard-headed old man Freylinghausen assented.

"All right, Greer.—Go to it! May be something in what you say. Won't cost much to try, anyhow."

That night, after the little bungalow up on the hill was shrouded in darkness, Jimmy Greer lay back drowsily upon his pillow.

"I'm some goat," he murmured sleepily. "Got Freylinghausen to try the—"

"What in the world are you talking about, Jimmy?" demanded his wife.

Jimmy roused.

"Oh, nothin', nothin' at all!" he yawned. "Just thinkin' about being a goat. G'night, Honey."

"'Night, Jimsy, dear."

The dry yards were black with trays of drying prunes that September when the big rain came. For two days the wind had blown from the south, and old fruit men scanned the skies with anxious eyes.

Jimmy Greer was sitting on his little front porch that Sunday afternoon when the first gray wisps of clouds gathered like a high fog.

Below, in the valley, the prune orchards lay in huge, faded-green squares against a landscape seared to a dusty brown by the ardent California sun. Men were scurrying about like ants in the dry yards, in a vain attempt to get the acres of drying fruit under cover, when the rain started gently in the late afternoon.

"I don't like the looks of this," Greer said to Mrs. Jimmy, who had come to the door at the sound of the first pattering drops. "If it keeps up, half the prune crop'll be ruined. They can't begin to get it under cover in time."

She looked up at the gray skies, then

through the mist of the rain at the orchards below.

"Oh, it's just a little sprinkle," she said hopefully. "Prunes have to go through a water bath, anyway."

"But not this way," answered Jimmy. "Rain'll make them ferment, then—good night!"

By nightfall the mere sprinkle had developed into a steady downpour and Jimmy's anxiety increased.

"Well, it's not my funeral," he remarked, as he paced up and down the room after dinner. "But there'll be the devil to pay to-morrow. With Hatcher laid up in the hospital with influenza and Freylinghausen back East, we'll have a merry time!"

"But it is your funeral, Jimmy. Can't you think of *anything* to do? Just think of what it would mean."

"I'm only human," retorted Jimmy. "It's fruit we have to have—good, sound fruit to protect our future sales sold on contract."

"Can't you buy it? Won't the outside packers sell?"

"Not on your life! They're in the same boat as the Consolidated, and they'll hang on to what prunes they have like grim death. Besides, it would tickle them to pieces to see us get squeezed."

"Well, get a good night's sleep, Jimmy," said Honey sagely, as she braided her hair preparatory to retiring. "You've simply got to think up a plan to get prunes somewhere."

Greer went up to the city the following morning in a gray downpour. When he reached the office it was to find Weston in a nervous panic.

"For the Lord's sake, Jimmy, what does this mean? Did you ever see the like? Half the prune crop's out in the dry yards—utterly ruined! And Hatcher in the hospital and Freylinghausen back East!"

"Keep your head, old man. It may not prove as bad as it looks. Reports will begin to come in pretty soon now. This rain may be only local."

But when the reports began to dribble in from different sections of the State, the rain was found to be general. Weston, unable to restrain himself, decided to run up north of Sacramento and see the extent of the loss in Colusa County, the rainfall being reported lighter up there. After he had gone, Greer settled down with corrugated brows to go over the situation.

It was critical in the extreme. The season had promised a bumper crop, and, following their usual custom, the packers had named a price for the crop to the grower early in the spring and then resold to their Eastern connections. With a large percentage of the crop ruined for packing purposes, it would be impossible to make deliveries of unfilled sales at the opening price quotations, and every packer faced a big loss.

His sales records showed Greer that the Consolidated had contracted to distributors thirty million pounds of dried prunes. Of this amount, twenty-eight million pounds had been delivered or were then in transit, leaving a balance of two million pounds to be shipped. If the price advanced even the fraction of a cent, the Consolidated would have to take a loss which would wipe out a goodly portion of the year's profits.

"If only Freylinghausen was on the job," groaned Jimmy, "or Hatcher was out of the hospital!" But even they couldn't make good prunes out of "frogs," he realized, and what the Consolidated had to have was first-class fruit at a price practically that of the opening quotation.

For long moments he sat at his desk concentrating on the problem, only to discard one idea after the other. Finally, he turned to his correspondence. He scanned the first letter in-

differently. It was from the firm's brokers in New York.

In re the car of prunes recently consigned to Batten Brothers, we wish to state that this firm advises us shipment should have been made one month later. Unless a dating of thirty days is allowed upon receipt of car, they cannot accept it upon arrival with draft attached.

Well, Batten Brothers would wish before many days that they had taken this car, thought Greer, with a frown of annoyance. Then, the idea that came to him caused his jaw to drop and his mouth to gape open, fishlike. It was simple. Too absurdly simple. But, however simple, it meant he would have to act at once and assume all responsibility. If he failed, if his plan did not work out— He shuddered at the thought, then rapidly made his decision.

"Miss Archer," he said crisply to his stenographer, "get Mr. Stokes on the phone and ask him if he will please step over to the sales department."

When Stokes, the Consolidated's traffic manager appeared, Greer waved him to a chair.

"Sit down, Billy. I guess you know what this rain means to us. But I've got a plan." Quickly he outlined his scheme to Stokes.

"Find out for me, if you can, how many cars of prunes have been shipped from this territory, together with their consignors and consignees. I'll have to have this information at once, old man, so hurry it up."

Upon Stokes' departure, Greer turned again to Miss Archer and dictated a lengthy, but carefully worded, telegram.

"Put this in code," he instructed, "and send it to our brokers at Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Omaha. See that it is sent off at once, please."

After Miss Archer had coded the telegram and the messenger had taken it to the telegraph office, Jimmy leaned back in his chair with a feeling of de-

pression, the reaction from the excitement of the moment. He had certainly butted in this time, and if his idea did not pan out—

When, some hours later, Stokes brought in his report, Greer brightened up somewhat and dictated more lengthy and detailed telegrams; then resigned himself to watching the dripping trees in the park opposite and fighting the nervous tension which possessed him.

Just before the closing hour, as, tired and worn, but with a triumphant light in his eyes, he was preparing to leave, Miss Archer handed him a belated yellow slip. Jimmy read:

Arrive day after to-morrow from Chicago. Situation critical. FREYLINGHAUSEN.

The next two days were days of whirlwind anxiety to Jimmy Greer—hours of long conferences with grave-faced bankers, and he fairly burned up the wires with instructions to brokers; but upon the morning of Freylinghausen's expected arrival Jimmy had a complete report of his activities neatly typed and placed upon the chief's desk for attention.

"If our people in the East follow orders, we'll get fruit enough," he told Mrs. Jimmy, "and it looks like they're succeeding. I heard from Boston last night, and—"

"Oh, Jimmy! I'm so proud of you!" She squeezed his arm affectionately. "I knew you could do it, if you only would."

He grinned back cheerfully, then the smile left his face.

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched, Honey. When Freylinghausen gets through with me this morning, maybe I'll have to be carried home on a stretcher," he called as he started down the hill for the interurban. And if Jimmy could have seen the look of pride in Mrs. Jimmy's soft,



His reserve vanished and he smote Greer a mighty blow upon the shoulder.

brown eyes, he would have been willing to face a dozen Freylinghausens.

The big chief came in direct from his train and went at once to the seclusion of his office. An hour later, the buzzer sounded on Jimmy's desk.

"Greer?"

"Speaking, Mr. Freylinghausen."

"Want to see you."

"Be right over," answered Jimmy briskly, but the briskness was in his voice only. Inwardly he was quaking.

"Sit down," rumbled Freylinghausen, after the two men had greeted each other. He took up the typewritten report and scanned it carefully in silence, and, to Jimmy, this silence was more ominous than an outburst of wrath. Finally he looked up.

"I suppose you are responsible for this, Greer?"

"Yes, sir." Jimmy's blue eyes met the cold gray ones of the big chief

firmly. "Mr. Hatcher was too ill to be disturbed and you were East. Somebody had to do something, so I—I just butted in, I guess."

"Uh-huh!" said Freylinghausen non-committally. "You certainly did." He surveyed Greer in ominous silence for a moment longer, then a smile twitched at the corners of his mouth, his reserve vanished, and he smote that astonished individual a mighty blow upon the shoulder.

"Greer, you're a life-saver!" he boomed in his big bass voice. "Do you know what you've done?" He took up the report again and ran a practiced eye over the concise statement.

"Six million seven hundred thousand pounds of prunes bought from the outside packers in the Eastern markets! They'll tear their hair when they hear about this. Those New York, Boston, and Philadelphia brokers must have been sound asleep to part from fruit at practically opening prices. Let's see."

Freylinghausen looked the report over once more.

"These purchases enable us to fill our contract sales at a slight loss, but leave us four million seven hundred thousand pounds of prunes on a rising market. And you picked 'em right out of the air!" he chortled, as he thrust a yellow slip into Greer's hand. "Here! Read this. It came in just a few minutes ago."

The telegram was from Jordan Brothers, the Consolidated's New York brokers, and Jimmy read:

Report of big loss prune crop account rain boosting price trade. Offering eleven three eighths basis for immediate delivery. Wire instructions regarding holdings.

For a moment Jimmy saw Freylinghausen's broad face smiling at him through a blur. Then he recovered himself.

"I'm mighty glad it turned out this way, Mr. Freylinghausen," he said, as he turned to leave. "I don't mind owning I've had some mighty anxious minutes."

As he reached the door, the big chief stopped him.

"Wait a little, Greer. How did you happen to think of this scheme?"

"It just came over me in a flash," answered Jimmy simply. "I knew the rain had ruined most of the prunes in the dry yards, and, with such a percentage of loss, the price was bound to advance. Then when Batten Brothers refused to accept a car of fruit consigned to them, I got the idea and figured if we could buy up what the outside packers were offering before the price raised, we could clean up. Stokes got a line on who had the fruit. After that, it was merely a case of beating the other fellow to it."

Freylinghausen listened with something like admiration creeping into his face.

"Well, I'm damned!" he said to himself. Then aloud: "I've got some

other news for you, Greer. Before I went East, Hatcher told me he would have to have an assistant to relieve him of part of the load." He glanced keenly at Jimmy as he spoke. "We've been keeping an eye on you for some time, but until you began to take such an interest in the business, I don't mind saying we had another man in view. How would you like the place, say, at five thousand a year?" he finished abruptly.

That evening there was another celebration dinner in the little bungalow perched upon the hill, and as Jimmy Greer leaned in his chair with that feeling of peace and satisfaction with the world only engendered by the consumption of lobster Louis, supplemented by roast duck and topped with a quarter of a lemon pie in a cradle of flaky crust and hidden beneath a thick, golden-brown meringue, Mrs. Jimmy leaned forward and fixed him with a severe eye.

"James Greer, I don't believe you realize it at all," she said accusingly.

Jimmy rose.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began oratorically, addressing an imaginary group of diners. "I beg leave to propose a toast—a toast to the fairest of her sex; a butter in of butter ins; one whose wise counsel and gentle chiding have placed me on the road to fortune."

He lifted his coffee cup and bowed gallantly to the little woman opposite.

"Forty years may have its drawbacks, but if a man is as old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks"—he paused dramatically—"then we are just about sixteen to-night."

Mrs. Jimmy looked up shyly.

"Sweet sixteen," she murmured, "and never been——"

But Jimmy Greer, stooping swiftly, never let her complete the sentence.





# "The Doughboy"

By Marion Short

Author of "Hallie Nobody," "Sympathy Coin," etc.

The moving story of a young sculptor.

THE proprietor of the stoneyard had long since been laid to rest in the Millport cemetery, but above the door of the shed that was once his office, its strong black lettering spectrally visible through an obscuring splash of white paint, still hung the sign of his calling.

**ROBERT KAESTNER'S  
Monument and Granite Works  
Memorials**

An old picket fence surrounded the stoneyard, and fallen against it was a pink marble angel poising a perpetual trumpet over the heads of the passers-by, while slabs of slate and limestone, oblongs of granite, urns, pillars, and other potential memorials, were ranged in formal rows, just as the departed Kaestner had left them.

The pink marble angel was, as usual, the first thing to smite Mrs. Kaestner's vision as she stepped from her cottage into the cold of a wintry March morning. About her head was wound a gray muffler, the color of which found a kindred note in the gray of her eyes and intensified the wholesome red of her cheeks. A heavy coat covered her round, motherly figure. Young Jimmie Kaestner had reopened the shed for a workshop, after a long stay at a hospital for disabled soldiers, and daily she carried him his lunch.

Progress across lots was rendered difficult by a solidly frozen glare of

snow and ice, and halfway of the journey, the mother stopped to glance back wistfully. The thick smoke scurrying in frantic wisps from the cottage chimney betokened the fire just freshened in the big base-burner stove.

"Warm as toast, always!" she sighed.

But it was not of her own comfort she was thinking. Her sturdiness defied the cold and in a few minutes she would return to bask in the friendly coziness of her living room. It was different with Jimmie. Most of his waking hours were spent in the drafty discomfort of the shed.

"Chip, chip, chi-i-ip!"

The prosy sound of a chisel waring upon stone caused Mrs. Kaestner to approach the workshop door very softly. With extreme caution she turned the doorknob and so managed to slip unobserved into the big bare room, where she dropped down into a broken chair against the wall. She was always fearful of distracting the young sculptor's attention during one of his inspirational moments.

"Madelon, Madelon, Madelon!"

Jimmie was softly singing as he worked—that strange song he had picked up while with the A. E. F. in France. Sometimes Mrs. Kaestner did not know whether she approved of his zest for it. But when she heard it she knew things were going to please



him, and she had developed a secret fondness for the gay little air herself. For four long months, with that tune for company, her boy had studied, schemed, labored to free from a prison of stone the life-size figure of a typical, helmeted doughboy.

"Madelon, Madelon, Madelon!"

Jimmie was forging ahead rapidly, no doubt about it, loving his task as some men love their pastimes. Yet how violently, as a youngster, he had rebelled against adopting his father's trade! What boyish insults he had flung at the prized "sample" monuments of the elder Kaestner's making! Even when his deft fingers proved his natural aptitude for cutting, shaping, polishing, he still looked upon the stonemason's tools with loathing. Won to a different way of thinking, at last, it was not to moral suasion that credit was due, but to the chance remarks of a bystander, leaning one day across the stoneyard fence.

"I say, Kaestner, you want to look out for that boy of yours, or he'll leave you so far behind, in time, you'll never catch up with him! You're a good workman, old man, but sonny, there, handles his tools with the ease of some of the big fellows I have known, the kind that carve out figures for triumphal arches and all that sort of thing. I've noticed him more than once. Congratulations! Wish I had a boy like him!"

And without waiting for a reply, Senator Follinsbee, the one celebrity of whom Millport could boast, had turned and marched up the street, leaving Jimmie agape with astonishment at his unexpected praise.

From that day, the boy had evidenced as complete a change of heart as that displayed by a sinner brought to the mourner's bench. Thrift he had never known, but straightaway he began to put aside his small earnings, and on Sundays and holidays paid his way to

towns where the civic taste for statuary had expressed itself in libraries, museums, or public parks. His parents marveled at the pile of well-filled sketch-books resulting from these excursions. Their hearts were big with pride when he announced his intention of applying for a humble assistant position in the studio of a famous New York sculptor. Then two unexpected things happened to wreck the family hopes. First, Robert Kaestner died. A few months later war was declared.

Mrs. Kaestner, a prey to thronging memories, stirred slightly and caused the broken chair to emit a protesting squeak.

"Why, hello, mother! How long have you been sitting there?"

"As long as this old chair would let me without making a fuss about it. Hungry?"

"Try me and see."

He thrust his tools into the huge pocket of his workman's apron, whisked an impalpable white dust off his face with a piece of chamois skin, strode over to his mother and bent to burrow a kiss into her willing cheek.

He was tall and gaunt, an ordinary, lanky young man of twenty-two without special distinction of form or feature, but with a frank, magnetic smile that won friends for him almost at sight.

Mrs. Kaestner herself had never had need to be won. She had been all Jimmie's since that far-away, early morning hour when, fighting her way through a haze of incredible suffering, she had waked to find him cuddled in the corner of her arm, his face one of startling homeliness beneath a fuzz of sun-colored hair.

"A body wouldn't be so afraid of catching cold in here, Jimmie, if you could only remember that that oil stove wasn't meant just for an ornament and light it once in a while."

The next minute he had set a match to the wick.

"Br-r-r!" she trilled, shiveringly. "I warn you, son, if you have the room as cold as this when the Memorial Committee call to get acquainted with your 'Doughboy,' they won't stay long enough even to take a look at him."

"Won't, eh? Then I'll bolt the door and hold 'em here until they change their minds."

Jimmie's deep voice was hoarse but cheerful. He threw out his chest and stretched his long arms ceilingward.

"The way you coddle me, mother, anybody'd think I was a kid in dresses instead of a big husky who'd lived through fifteen months in the trenches."

His laugh, as he spoke, ended in a harsh, tearing cough. Millport's first volunteer had fared pretty badly in France, having been gassed not only once but twice.

Pretending not to notice his distress—she knew Jimmie wished to have his ailment ignored as far as possible—Mrs. Kaestner turned her eyes away from his heaving chest and the bulging veins in his forehead, and her glance fell upon the uncompleted statue instead. As it did so, she trembled a little and spread out her hands to catch the rising warmth of the stove. It had seemed to her more than once, of late, that as the figure of the carven soldier emerged each day more clearly from the enveloping stone, the sculptor himself was steadily, strangely sinking away from her into the awful formlessness of that which she did not even dare to name.

"What a difference this little blaze has made already!"

Jimmie's paroxysm over, his mother went back to the broken chair and began to uncover the basket. Her countenance, serene and untroubled, gave no sign of the visitation of gloomy forebodings. Jimmie was not the only one in the Kaestner family made of heroic

stuff. When a widow has once smiled her only son off to fight on the battlefields of France, she can smile at anything after that.

"Don't you think you have worked about enough for to-day, son?" she asked carelessly, handing him a freshly ironed napkin from the basket.

"Not half enough—just getting a good start. Did you bring me some coffee?"

"Well, if I look deep down, maybe I'll find some." And she produced a bottle of steaming liquid, forthwith.

Jimmie, gulping a full cup with exaggerated appreciation, demanded more. He had dropped down on the floor and was sitting, Turk fashion, close to his mother's knee.

"I'll bet that's a ham sandwich you're undoing!"

"Then you've lost your bet, for it's chicken."

"My! Where'd you get the chick, mother?"

"Why, when I came to look, there was enough left over from supper to make a good, big, thick one!"

Jimmie laughed understandingly.

"Mother, you're a fraud. You scrimped yourself last night just to save this out for me. You needn't deny it. I know you. Next time there's chicken for supper, I'll keep an eye on you. Um-m, but it tastes good!"

"There's a piece of sponge cake to finish off with when you're ready for it."

Mrs. Kaestner always hid away some surprise in the basket, and sponge cake was the one chosen for to-day.

"But I heard you declare there'd be no more sponge cake in our family while eggs were so high," accused Jimmie.

"But they've gone down," explained his mother.

"How much?" pursued the son.

"One cent on the dozen," came the answer, with hesitating truthfulness,

"but, anyhow," defiantly, "I'm fond of sponge cake and I made up my mind I was just going to have some."

Jimmie alternated cake and sandwich with impartial favor, his blue eyes twinkling. In owing to a fondness for sponge cake, he knew his mother perjured her ingenuous soul.

"How's your 'Doughboy' getting along to-day?"

It was a question regularly asked toward the close of each visit.

Jimmie, 'undoubling himself like an elongated jackknife, got to his feet and turned toward the scaffolding which supported the statue.

"He's marching at double-quick lately. I'm glad he is, for there's a lot to be done before the closing date of the competition. I've only two weeks left, and you know how time flies."

"Yes, I know." Her eyes traveled to the original clay model of "The Doughboy," still standing in its skeleton framework. "Don't you think, dear, it might have helped some if you'd finished your clay figure complete before you began on the other?"

"Not a bit of it." Jimmie shook his head decisively. "It would only have meant delay. I know what I'm after, and stone is what I'm used to and can handle best."

As he spoke, his fingers moved caressingly along an uncut section of the block of hard, white New Hampshire granite he had chosen for his medium. The boy loved beauty of material almost as much as beauty of design, and the piece before him possessed the adaptability of fine Italian marble.

"Any criticisms to offer?"

At his unexpected question, Mrs. Kaestner started, and the flush in her cheeks deepened a little. She peered at her son's handiwork first through, then over, her silver-rimmed spectacles before she answered.

"Well, I wouldn't say it was exactly a criticism. I don't suppose he'll have

an expression like that when you get through with him. Of course you don't intend that he should."

"An expression like what, mother?" the boy asked pleasantly. "What is it hits you wrong?"

"Oh, there isn't anything you do I don't like, son," she parried gently, "but from the way that right cheek is furrowed, a body would almost think he was smiling."

"Smiling? That's hardly the word for it. My buddy was grinning from ear to ear when we cleaned up that nest of machine guns at Sergy. We were stumbling through a patch of woods near the Marne salient, he running forward with advanced bayonet—like that," indicating the figure before him. "I was the last man he spoke to before the Fritzies got him. His gun flew from his hand as he fell, but he looked up at me, still smiling."

The arm Jimmie had thrown about her shoulder grew tense. At such moments the mother realized what a differently, strangely older and grimmer Jimmie he was than the one who had been shoveled into the hopper of the great war machine in France. Some of the boy spirit seemed to have been ground out of him and left there, along with his fallen comrades, never to return again.

"Of course it's all right then," she conceded, as his arm relaxed. "I had a sort of old-fashioned notion in my foolish head that a soldier statue ought to look sort of solemn and heroic. But if you think folks will understand that—"

Jimmie shrugged his shoulders.

"If they don't understand, why, I can't help it, that's all! I'm not trying to turn out what somebody thinks a fighting doughboy ought to look like, but one like my buddy, who really faced the music. Why, mother, we boys didn't take the war as something solemn and heroic, to pull a long face

about. It was tough sometimes, of course, but we looked on it all more like a game—a great big, nerve-testing game, and we set out to play it like one."

As it chanced, and though Jimmie Kaestner in his modest studio did not know it, he was not the only artist at work in Millport. In the splendid library of the Follinsbee home, on the more aristocratic side of the town, Andrew Carson, the noted New York sculptor, was engaged upon a portrait bust of the senator.

"If I can't get what I am after today, we may as well bring this sitting to a close!"

The sculptor's impatient exclamation occurred in the midst of one of his bi-weekly visits to the senator. He was modeling the great man's heavily lined forehead with the uncompromising realism that made him both feared and famous as a portrait creator.

"You're badly relaxed this afternoon—not up to your usual posing standard. However, we'll try again. Talk, please, about something that interests you seriously."

The sitter flushed guiltily. He had been glancing surreptitiously out of the window in the direction of his stables, and Carson had not failed to notice it.

"I'll do my best, Mr. Carson," and he became all attention. "Just at present, Millport's prospective choice of a Soldiers' Memorial is the thing which interests me most."

"They're going to put up a memorial?"

"Yes, on the lawn in front of Community Hall. I've offered a thousand-dollar prize for a suitable design, limiting the competition to artists and sculptors right here in the State because I want the memorial to be something in which everybody'll take a local pride."

Pausing, he shook his fine head apprehensively—he rather prided himself on

his reputed resemblance to Henry Clay—and his manner became confidential.

"Privately," he continued, "I've an idea the town committee is just as apt to choose the worst design as the best one, and I rather wish I had induced some established professional like yourself to do the memorial, instead of taking chances with a competition."

"Aha, that's it!" Carson exclaimed, observing the characteristic crease in the senator's brow for which he had been lying in wait.

"You agree with me?" asked Follinsbee rather ruefully.

"Certainly, certainly," answered Carson, cheerfully polite, though he had not the slightest notion what the senator's question was about. The hazel eyes in his long, thin face were as glassily bright as a pair of twin camera lenses, and had registered an impression on his brain with almost equal exactitude.

"Mr. Smith, Mr. Tutweiler, and Mr. Peters," intoned the senator's butler, stepping ceremoniously inside the door.

"The memorial judges—the very people of whom I was speaking!" explained Follinsbee in surprise. "I'm sorry, Mr. Carson, but I'm afraid I'll have to interrupt the sitting long enough to find out what they want. The competition hasn't closed, and I can't imagine what has brought them here at this stage of the game."

He turned to the butler, who was interestedly eying the sculptor's busy fingers, ridged with wet clay.

"Explain, please, that I'm busy with an appointment, but can manage to spare them a few moments. Let them come right in here."

Carson was completing a detail of his modeling as the callers came into the room, and when he stopped his look of having temporarily abandoned a piece of work that might spoil, like a cook's pudding if he stayed away from it too long, caused the three men to remain

standing instead of accepting the Follinsbee invitation to sit down.

"Well, gentlemen," inquired Follinsbee, after the formality of greetings was over, "what can I do for you?"

"You can advise us if you will, senator," Abner Tutweiler, the youngest committeeman answered, "on a question that has arisen out of the memorial competition."

The speaker was vividly florid of complexion, vividly alert in manner, and almost consumed the drab personalities of his middle-aged companions in the blaze of his own.

"I'll say in advance," he continued, "that, though the competition has not officially closed, we have practically decided that a bronze tablet by a Boston artist is the best memorial that has been submitted. And we can now turn our attention—"

"But why should we take up outside matters?" Peters interrupted, his voice pitched high, and keen as a blade. "The prize decision is as far as our responsibility ought to go."

"Granted that young Kaestner cannot be considered in the prize-winning class," answered Tutweiler heatedly, facing Peters with the air of renewing an argument which had begun to exhaust his patience, "that doesn't give us any excuse for not taking him into account. He's been working under a very bad handicap, and, seeing he's the only Millport boy competing, I ask a square deal for him, if nothing more."

"Kaestner?" The senator gasped at the name with the relieved manner of one who sights something tangible after having been lost in a fog. "Jimmie Kaestner, you mean?" Then, as Tutweiler gave an affirmative reply. "He was the boy who led off the volunteering here in Millport, wasn't he?"

"He was," stated Tutweiler. "But he didn't arrive home with quite the hurrah that took him away. You know, senator, all one has to do to realize

what the aftermath of the war means to a good many American families, is to visit any of our reconstruction hospitals—even now, with the war long past. Well, Jimmie Kaestner was sent home from one a few months since, and he's in bad shape yet."

"I'm sorry to hear that about him," said Follinsbee. "I remember him quite well as a little fellow. Bright youngster, he was! I used to see him trotting around with his father—Kaestner, the monument man. And so the boy is trying for the prize, is he? That's interesting. Er—just what did you mean by that 'square deal' suggestion, Mr. Tutweiler?"

"He means to imply that I'm against giving Kaestner fair treatment," broke in Peters shrilly, "but I want to say right here that I'm as square as anybody. This committee has been mighty fine to Kaestner, considering all the extra trouble he's put us to."

"What extra trouble?" inquired Follinsbee briefly.

"Why, expecting us to come to his studio to look at his entry instead of his sending in preliminary drawings, or a plaster cast, as the Boston sculptor did. He wrote and insisted on our coming. Well, we finally made him an exception and took time off from business and went. And I say he has no right to expect any more of us than that."

"Getting back to Mr. Tutweiler's suggestion of a 'square deal,'" said the senator, patiently striving to evolve order out of the conversational chaos, "what is the specific question before the house?"

"It's the question of whether this committee shall award the boy an honorable mention, taking the circumstances of the case into consideration. He has an actual, mammoth statue there, carved out of marble—"

"Yes, and has bit off more than he can chew," affirmed Peters. "That's the plain truth of it, senator. Mr.



Smith and I are of the unanimous opinion that Kaestner has undertaken something far too ambitious for him to get away with."

Smith, advancing from the background, nodded vacuously. Having scant opinions of his own, Peters' flow of language carried him along like a boat.

"What if it is ambitious?" argued Tutweiler. "That's no discredit to the boy. It wouldn't hurt this committee to vote him a special honorable mention." He turned to Follinsbee appealingly. "Senator, it's a dignified figure of a soldier he's made, as far as he's got with it."

"Oh, is it?" sneered Peters. "And how about a dignified statue having a smile on its face like a boy playing leap-frog? What about that, senator, I ask you?"

"You can't tell how the face is going to look when it's only half finished," defended Tutweiler. "Come, give the boy a chance!"

"Not when giving him a chance means imposing a piece of bad art on this community," answered Peters. "Sculpturing is one thing and mere stoncutting is another. I call Kaestner's statue a stonecutter's botch. Why, if we gave it honorable mention, the town would insist on setting it up here in Millport, and right on the public square, like as not! That's why Mr. Smith and myself are opposed to honorable mention, senator. We refuse to go on record to posterity as citizens of Millport who didn't know good from bad."

Follinsbee, at a loss to know which side to champion, turned and gazed out of the window. Across a space of gleaming snow—perhaps the last of the season—he could see his sleigh standing out in front of the barn, the groom filling it with rugs.

"Yours is a difficult problem, gentlemen, but deals with something entirely  
4—Smi.

within your own province as members of the Memorial Committee." He gave an eloquent gesture to indicate his complete apartness from the argumentative tangle in which his callers were involved. "I regret that I have no suggestions whatever to offer."

"But you can take a look at Kaestner's 'Doughboy' yourself, senator," suggested Tutweiler. "That's what we came here to ask of you, though we've palavered a lot before getting around to it. If you agree with Smith and Peters that it's too bad for honorable mention, I'll give in. But as it stands now, well, I'll resign from this committee before I'll admit I'm on the wrong side of the fence!"

A rather strained silence followed his proposition, but at last the senator spoke.

"Hey, Carson!" he exclaimed, turning to the sculptor as if struck by a sudden inspiration. "You know more about the sculptor's art in a minute than the rest of us would in a thousand years. If you saw merit enough in Kaestner's attempt to admit of honorable mention, I know you'd say so. And God knows you'd say so if you didn't. You're reputed to be a man who might forgive bad manners or bad morals at a pinch, but bad art—never!" Then, as Carson demurred, "Now don't say 'no.' I'll regard your offices in the matter as not only a kindness to the members of the Memorial Committee, but as a personal favor to me. Gentlemen," and he turned toward his visitors in his most commanding manner, "the decision will rest absolutely with Mr. Carson. That's understood?"

There was a chorus of agreement, showing that for once there was unanimity of opinion on the part of each and every member of the Soldiers' Memorial Committee.

"Land sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. Kaestner, pushing back from the breakfast



table to remark upon the snowstorm raging outside. "I can see the door of the workshop flopping in the wind fit to break off its hinges."

"I suppose," remarked Jimmie without interest, "I must have forgotten to shut it last time I came away."

He was lying back in a big morris chair, wearing the thick dressing gown his mother had given him for Christmas.

"It's too bad the day's so stormy you've got to stay at home, dear. Have some more toast?"

"No, mother. I don't seem to be very hungry this morning. But don't blame my idleness on the weather," he went on after a pause, "for it's no use blinking facts. We've had three days of the finest sunshine any one could ask, and I've lazed around home here through it all. I wanted to do something worth while, if I could, something that would commemorate every fighting doughboy in the figure of my buddy, and make you proud of me—seeing I've been unable to carry on for dad—but as to finishing 'The Doughboy' before the competition ends—it can't be done, that's all."

As if in mockery of his despairing sigh, a canary in the window sent out loops of trills in the brightest manner possible. Mrs. Kaestner, forcing a smile to her stiffening lips, tried in vain to speak the reassuring words that usually came at her bidding. There was a finality in Jimmie's declaration which she had never heard before. It seemed to her that in letting go the hope of completing his statue, he was letting go his hold on life itself. She was not prepared for that—not yet, oh, no, dear Lord—not yet!

"Though maybe I've just got a grouch," the boy added valiantly, seeing the look of suffering in her eyes. "Maybe if the sun shines again tomorrow I can beat it over to the old shop and get busy, after all."

"That's the way to talk," answered Mrs. Kaestner, so cheerfully that it seemed Jimmie's tender attempt at deception had succeeded. "And I'll just run over now and shut that door while I think of it. Those boys who were loitering around yesterday might notice you weren't there and do some damage to your tools, or even set the place on fire—who knows?"

But her anxiety to get to the shed had quite another reason than the one she had mentioned to Jimmie. She had seen some one enter it a few moments before, some one who looked like Abner Tutweiler, of the Memorial Committee. Jimmie had braced up and made fine progress after she had reported the noncommittal visit of the three townsmen—which she had colored hopefully, in spite of herself, on narrating it to the boy—and if the present visitor should comment favorably on that progress, it might work still another miracle in Jimmie's condition. Who could tell?

"I'll be back in just a minute or two," she called from the kitchen, where she had stopped to put on her arctics. "I'm going out this way to save steps. If Doctor Gray calls while I'm gone, tell him I'll be back before he can say Jack Robinson."

But it was Carson—not Tutweiler—who had stopped at the studio, according to promise, and who, even as Mrs. Kaestner's hopes blossomed afresh, was deciding it was hardly worth his while to have done so. He made no attempt to remove the sailcloth covering the marble above its base, for after one look at Jimmie's clay model, he could not bring himself to inspect its carven counterpart. He was filled with a certain artistic rage that good marble should be so profaned. Despite a crude strength in the boy's handling of the clay, a promising independence of attack and line, it was hopelessly uncouth and amateurish. Yes, that should be

his report to the committeemen. It would be a very simple report, but sufficient. He drew his fur collar well up around his ears and started for the door.

"But you haven't seen the other one—you haven't uncovered it—the real one, I mean. That's just the clay figure he began on you're looking at."

The few words Carson stammered in reply were unintelligible to any one but himself. He knew it must be Mrs. Kaestner who was addressing him, and he was nonplused by her unexpected appearance.

"I came over here through the snow," she explained breathlessly, "because I thought you might be Abner Tutweiler, of the Memorial Committee. At least I hoped it would be Abner if it were any of them. He didn't act so standoffish and cold as the others did the day they were here—not so afraid of giving a body a little word of encouragement. But no matter who you are, I'll be happy to show you Jimmie's 'Doughboy' just the same. I'm his mother, you know."

Her shoulders were covered with a coating of snow, and her eyelashes, as she worked to unpin the sailcloth, were fringed with crystal tears.

"Thank you," cried Carson, "but please don't bother to show it to me. I've got to go—can't stay, in fact—great hurry—some other day——"

"Oh," cried Mrs. Kaestner enthusiastically, in the midst of his excuses, "now that I've got a good look at you, I know who you are! And Jimmie will think it wonderful when I tell him you've been here. You're Mr. Carson, the sculptor, who is at the Follinsbees' so much. Some one pointed you out to me on the street one day. You are Mr. Carson—I'm not mistaken, am I?"

"No," admitted the sculptor unwillingly, "you're not mistaken. I—I've heard of your son, of course, and

dropped in just casually—er—though my time is decidedly limited. I hope he's feeling better. I hear he has been quite ill."

He was trying to distract her attention from the young sculptor's work to the young sculptor's self, but the effect of his attempt was unfortunate. Starting to answer him, she broke into a flood of tears.

"Oh, Mr. Carson, my boy is breaking his heart because he can't finish his 'Doughboy!'" And she leaned against the shrouded marble figure, trying to get back her self-control. "Please excuse me, please," she gasped tremulously. "I suppose I just had to let it come out some time. I've cried so much inside. And your asking about his health and all—but I didn't mean to give way like that, and I won't again. It's breaking my promise to God. I promised Him faithfully, if He'd only let Jimmie live to get home, after they had sent word from France he was on his deathbed, I'd be thankful for every day I had him with me, and be brave."

Drying her eyes, she turned away and made another quick move toward the statue. Up went her hands to the sailcloth, and in another moment Jimmie's treasure stood revealed. Gazing at it as she talked, she was not aware that Carson kept his eyes carefully lowered.

"It's very rough," she explained, "but that's what Jimmie wants. 'Impressionistic,' he calls it; and you can see it's not all refined and smoothed out, like the old-style work—that angel out in the yard, for instance, though I don't suppose you noticed it in this snowstorm. Jimmie says he can't work like that any more, that after a fellow's been in the war, he's satisfied to get out stuff without any trimmings, rough and real."

"That's not a bad idea," Carson looked down at her kindly as she turned toward him, wondering desperately what he could say that would not hurt her too much. If she asked for the

truth—and there was hardly a doubt that she would do so—she seemed, somehow, too fine a soul to be spared.

"Doctor Gray says 'come!'"

A small figure, bounding into the room, ran up to Mrs. Kaestner and clutched at her skirts.

"Jimmie's fainted," he continued pantingly. "He's got a bad spell. Doc says don't get scared, but come. I was playing with some other boys, out in the snow, and he jumped down the steps and hollered to me——"

But before the boy had stopped speaking, Mrs. Kaestner was gone.

Left alone, the thought came to Carson that he was glad the hardest part of his task had been spared him, after all. Mechanically he picked up the rumpled piece of sailcloth to put back in place, and that was how he came, quite by chance, to look upon the figure that embodied the dream of Jimmie Kaestner. Having done so, he looked, and looked again. Something compelling held his gaze—that new note which every genius must strike once, if never again, to prove himself a member of the brotherhood divine. Carson, vibrating now to that note with the innermost chords of his being, sensed it in the smile that lay on the carven lips—the smile, with its tragic contrast to the brave eyes above!

"Breaking his heart, because he can't finish his 'Doughboy.'"

The mother's words came back to him as he noticed that the modeling of one arm was incomplete, and that the face was still overlapped with fringes of stone.

Whose life has not within its memory the record of some decisive act, prompted not so much by the personal will as by some seemingly occult force outside oneself? Carson was never able to explain to himself just why he picked up the graver he saw protruding from the pocket of Jimmie's discarded apron, nor what had induced him to

grasp the mallet and set to work. Bit by bit, the disfiguring fragments shadowing the granite face gave way. Yet Carson had no more personal feeling about it at the time, he recalled, than if he himself had been but a sort of tool in the hands of "The Doughboy's" creator.

A full week had passed since their last meeting when the Memorial Committee again assembled in the library at Follinsbee's. There they found the senator in great good humor.

"Before you proceed to the business in hand, gentlemen," he suggested, "let's have your opinion on the bust of me that Mr. Carson has just completed. He announces that it's ready to be cast in bronze." He gave a senatorial flourish toward the modeling table. "There my 'counterfeit presentment' stands! How does it impress you?"

Smith and Peters voiced simultaneous admiration for the sculptor's achievement. They were both good Democrats and had voted for the senator. Tutweiler, who was a conscientious Republican, and had voted against him, while agreeing that the bust was a work of art highly creditable to its maker, added critically, "Though in my opinion it *does* flatter the senator just a li-little."

For once, it was the unobtrusive Smith who took the lead concerning the matter which had brought them there.

"Well, Mr. Carson, we're ready for that decision of yours if you're ready to give it to us."

Carson, rolling a pellet of clay between his palms, nodded affably.

"I'm ready to give it, gentlemen, if you insist. But I hope you will permit me to defer doing so until you have called once more at Kaestner's studio. Such a call would, I'm certain, enable you to come to a final agreement among yourselves."

"I know what you mean," said Peters

quickly. "It's all over town the boy isn't able to leave his bed. And if his statue isn't any farther along now than it was the day we saw it——"

"But it is farther along," Carson assured him. "I have carefully inspected it more than once. His work has passed the incomplete stage which doubtless confused your judgment before, and you should be able to decide for, or against, honorable mention almost at sight of it, and without recourse to any one's opinion outside the committee."

The snow had melted. Faint traces of green were beginning to show around the base of the pink marble angel, and a rush of sweet spring air followed the three men as they opened the door and passed into the shed.

Sunlight was pouring through the one big window of the studio, and the white granite figure of "The Doughboy" stood out with dazzling radiance. For several moments after they had ranged themselves in front of it, the visitors stood perfectly still, except that Smith involuntarily removed his hat as at the passing of the colors, and, in the same manner, Tutweiler and Peters. Absorbed, they stood there, "The Doughboy" looking out over their heads, complete in every line of his magnificent, crouching body, his bayonet held ready for action, his young lips defying all the terrors of carnage and of death with that undaunted smile!

Peters, turning toward Tutweiler, saw that the tears were running down his cheeks.

"I feel the same way, Abner," he said.

Smith said nothing. He had turned his back and was engaged in mopping his face with a very damp handkerchief.

Mrs. Kaestner sat in her accustomed place at Jimmie's bedside. Flowers bloomed on a little stand at her elbow.

A gay coverlet lay over the bed. The canary, brought upstairs at Jimmie's request, sang almost continuously. Mrs. Kaestner, swaying gently back and forth in her rocking-chair, indulged in humorous remarks, joking about everything that gave the slightest excuse for it, and her laugh sounded as spontaneous, if not quite so gay, as the song of the canary. Nothing in the room suggested even a hint of impending tragedy, save that Jimmie's face, as it lay against the pillow, was strangely pale. Suddenly, though his eyes remained closed, the boy began to speak.

"I've been having the most wonderful dreams, mother, for days and days—so real that they haven't seemed like dreams at all. I've dreamed that right while I was lying here, and knew that I was lying here, time and again part of me traveled over to work at my 'Doughboy,' and the last time I went, he stood there, perfect, my buddy to the life!" Mrs. Kaestner, bending toward him, saw just a flutter of his long eyelashes, heard just the hint of a sigh. "I wish, mother, it could really have happened like that."

"I wish so, too, Jimmie." And somehow she managed to keep her voice from trembling. "I wish you could have been strong enough to do all you wished to do before the competition closed. To-morrow's the last day, you know. But never mind, dear. When you get better you can go back to work again, and maybe—who knows?—turn out something even finer than you would have done if this little setback hadn't stopped you."

Still she kept up the pretense that he would recover, although she had been told the end was near.

"Jimmie, I've something to tell you," she said gently, after a pause. "Just now when I was looking out of the window, I saw Mr. Tutweiler, Mr. Peters, and Mr. Smith starting over here

from the workshop. I haven't had time to send them word, and I suppose they thought everything was finished and ready for the competition. And, oh, Jimmie, don't let anything they say about your 'Doughboy' hurt you! Of course they'll intend to let us down easy, but still they might say something—not exactly kind."

"Let them say what they like, I can stand it." Her son's blue eyes opened wide as he looked up at her, and he smiled. But Mrs. Kaestner turned away chokingly. It seemed to her the sort of smile "The Doughboy" wore.

A mirror on the wall gave back her reflection as she started from the room, and she stopped before it to smooth back her hair. She tied on a fresh white apron as she went down the stairs and opened the front door before the anticipated visitors had started up the walk.

"We'd like to see your son Jimmie a few minutes, if we may," said Abner Tutweiler. Invited into the living room, the three committeemen stood warming chilly fingers before the stove. "We've just come from a visit to his—well, I suppose he calls it his studio—and we haven't got long to stay."

Mrs. Kaestner grew a bit rigid, clutching convulsively at the sides of her apron. The mother instinct to guard its young flamed with sudden fierceness in her quiet breast.

"I'm sorry, but I guess you'd better wait until some other time to see Jimmie. I don't know as he feels quite strong enough for company to-day. Of course you know his 'Doughboy' isn't finished, and——"

"Mother," sounded her son's voice from above, weak but determined,

"please ask the folks to step right up here where I am."

With creaking shoes and the formality of church officials passing the plate, the three men filed up the stairs and into Jimmie's room. The boy hailed them in his most friendly fashion. He had raised himself slightly and was propped on one elbow.

Mrs. Kaestner, remaining outside, leaned against the wall, her hand to her heart. She could not bear to see Jimmie's face when the final blow to his hopes was dealt him. Dumbly she prayed for strength.

"Mr. James Kaestner," intoned Tutweiler, in the judicial manner of a stern magistrate about to administer sentence upon some unfortunate culprit, "of course there's still a day left before the Memorial Competition closes, but there's no use wasting any more time about it as we've already decided on a memorial that's entirely to our liking." He stopped and cleared his throat. In the act of doing so he forgot that he was an official committeeman, and remembered only that he was a friend and neighbor instead. "Jimmie, finished or unfinished, your 'Doughboy,' in our unanimous opinion, is simply great! We've agreed to award it the Follinsbee prize, and it will be erected in front of the Community Hall to honor the memory of every American boy who fought and died in the great World War!"

"Mother!"

It was all in that one word, cried out in rapture to the little woman standing with illumined face and clasped hands in the doorway. He had striven that some day she might be proud of him, and the day had come!





# BENSON'S SUCCESS

By  
*Virginia  
Middleton*

Author of  
"An Eminently Practical Person,"  
"And in Their Death—" etc.

Alice looked up from the letter and across the meagerly spread table to her husband.

"It spells success," she said. "Doesn't it?"

"I suppose so," Gerald conceded. He seemed a little bewildered. "Let's see the darned thing again."

Alice shoved the letter back across the narrow board. Typewritten on heavy, blue paper beneath the chastely engraved letterhead of Rothmeyer & Blum, it was a document equivalent to the bestowal of the gift of Midas upon a fortunate playwright. For Sol Rothmeyer had never been known to "pick a failure" in all his years of acting and producing, and it was Sol Rothmeyer who had signed the letter implying that he not only hoped to produce "The Lilac Dooryard," but hoped to act in it himself.

"But David seems out of Rothmeyer's usual line," said Gerald, pondering aloud about his hero.

"He probably wants to do something serious, something thoughtful, after so

many years of horseplay," said Alice patronizingly. Then her face lost its look of superiority and dwelt with pride upon her husband. "Gerald Benson," she chanted prophetically, "Gerald Benson, author of one of the sweetest and most wholesome plays of the season. Of any season. A play ranking with—ranking with—, What do you think it ranks with, Gerry?"

"I don't know," answered Gerald dully out of his puzzled reverie.

"I think with 'The Little Minister,'" Alice decided happily. "Oh, Gerry, I was right, after all, wasn't I? 'Look into your own heart and write.' That was what I said to you, wasn't it? 'Look—into y——'"

"It has been said before," Gerald interrupted, with the irritated look of a man whose wife is given to the sonorous proclamation of ancient saws. Alice's blue eyes darkened half angrily, and there was a swift rush of mottled color to her face.

"Oh, if success is going to make you



like that!" she cried. "If, at the very first approach of it, you are going to deny me any share in it—any credit for it—are going to say that I wasn't even the poor little mouse that helped the lion——"

Now, honeybunch, you know that I am not going to do anything of the sort," her husband answered earnestly. "You've been the brickiest of bricks. You've borne——" He looked with sharp distaste at the dark little room in which they sat, with the sink and shelves of the kitchenette drearily visible where Alice had forgotten to replace the screen, at the disordered cot on which he had slept the night before, not yet restored to its daytime dignity of a sofa. "You've borne this. You've stood mean clothes and no friends and scrubby fare and every shabby, disgusting thing that this old Sodom and Gomorrah of a town hands out to young fools who try to force their fortune in it. You've stood it all like the sweet angel that you are!" He finished with sudden warmth.

"Any woman would do that for the man she loved." Alice, mollified, recited it with the air which combined conscious nobility with an even more conscious modesty.

"But what I mean is something quite different. I helped you with your work, didn't I, Gerry boy? It was I who said that our own sweet story, our golden romance, would make the loveliest play in the world, didn't I? And that I would give you the right to use it? That I would bare my soul to the mob for your sake, for the sake of your success—that I would give you it all: dad, so grouchy about your not having a regular job of the sort that he understood, insurance or law or something; Lou Carson, so bent on making mischief between us; the lilacs; poor, dear Walter's broken heart and the perfectly sweet way he bore it? It was all my gift to you, wasn't it, dear heart?

And you didn't have much belief in it at first, did you?"

"I didn't see much dramatic value in it at first, that's true," Gerald confessed warily. "But after I got to work on it I began to see possibilities. Well, dearest, I guess you were right. Sol Rothmeyer never picks a failure. If he says he wants 'The Lilac Door-yard,' it means that—well, that the public has been fed up on triangles and bedrooms, and all that stuff, and that it wants——"

"Just sweet, true, young love, like yours and mine, Gerry," said Alice softly.

"Like yours and mine," Gerald repeated, giving her an affectionate look across the table.

"Does Rothmeyer's leading lady look like me?" asked Alice.

"I don't remember that I have ever seen her. She isn't as pretty as you. We can bank on that." He went around the table and kissed her. "Good-by, old dear; I'm off. Go out and lay yourself in a simply incredible supply of haberdashery. I pray Heaven that you'll never have to wear that thing again." He touched her faded kimono sleeve.

"I shan't," Alice prophesied happily. "Our ship has come in—our splendid, golden bark, filled with shining stuffs!"

"Well, good-by," he interrupted from the door. Again his forehead wore the slight frown, scarcely more than wince, with which, Alice had observed, he often heard her finest literary flights.

"I wonder if he could possibly be a little jealous of my gift of expression?" she pondered. "Dear old silly! As if I would ever use it in competition with him! He little understands a woman's heart, a true woman's heart. He seems almost disappointed. He never really believed in that play. But I did. I *knew*. And it's so silly and conceited always to be superior about the public. As though the great, throbbing heart

of humanity was not bigger, truer, better than any make-believe, little, high-brow clique. Sometimes Gerry has acted almost as if he had to excuse himself for having his romance like other people's—in outline, anyway. Well, now he must see——"

He fingered the fabric of the tea gown, he nodded admiration of the blue mules, of the silk stockings.

"Yes, dear, very nice, very pretty."

He listened to her tale of apartment agents interviewed. "We must stay in town to be in touch with the dramatic life of the country," she had said. But he did not meet her eyes, he did not volunteer the story of his adventures. When her own tale was done, and he was still silent, preoccupied, she began to look worried.

"Wasn't it all right?" she asked, a little breathlessly, her eyes traveling from his averted face to the silken litter on the chairs and table—forerunners merely.

"Oh, yes!" he answered, starting.

"Is the contract signed?"

"Yes—and the five hundred deposited, and rehearsals to begin at once—and—and——"

"And what?" Alice's voice grew slightly strident in anxiety. "Have they asked you to make many changes?" He met her eyes now, and she read in his face that changes had been decreed. She frowned, sighed, then dismissed the incident.

"Well, after all, Gerry, Sol Rothmeyer knows best. In your next play you won't have to kotow to any one. You'll have learned all the tricks of the trade. And then, even Sol Rothmeyer won't be allowed to make changes. Have they altered any of my speeches—I mean of *Evangeline's*?"

"A little."

"I think that you ought to have held out against that," said Alice coldly.

"But—but——" He did not meet her eyes.

"Certainly I know more about what a girl in love—a frank, wholesome, womanly, American girl in love—would say than any Mr. Sol Rothmeyer can possibly know. You'll ruin the play, Gerald, if you let that man tinker with it too much. In the essentials, of course, in mere stagecraft——"

He looked at her. He flushed uncomfortably. Then he began to smile, an engaging, whimsical smile—appealing, too.

"Alice," he said impulsively, "you've got to know it, and to know it at once. You're a sport—you'll understand! Rothmeyer is going to burlesque it—is going to burlesque 'The Lilac Door-yard.'"

"Burlesque it! Burlesque our sacred love story?"

His smile vanished. He dropped his eyes.

"He is going to play it as straight burlesque," he said doggedly.

"And you—you are going to let him?" Anger threatened strangulation. "Oh! Oh! But you never believed in it! You didn't want it to be a success because you were jealous of my part in it. You always distrust my intuitions."

"Alice, stop! Let us not, either of us, say anything we'll be sorry for. It's true I didn't believe in—our story—as drama. That doesn't mean I don't believe in it as—as happiness—sweet-heart. But when you persuaded me to try it, and I got to work, I confess I began to like it, after a fashion. It was a stunt to cast anything so simple, so trite, into dramatic form. Well, Rothmeyer says it's cast in darned good dramatic form. But that's it! It's burlesque almost as it stands. And it will be a howling success, and will keep you in these"—he touched the tea gown—"and me in rent money while I'm doing something serious."

"You would sell your own child!"

The dogged look settled upon his face again.

"It isn't my child, Alice. And it isn't yours," he added eagerly. "Dearest, don't you see? Don't you understand? We were two ecstatic, silly, young fools. We felt the emotions of all the other silly, young fools since language was invented. Thank God we felt them! They were real. But the words—the complications! They weren't ours. They were the pastry-fiction makers', the sugarplum poets', of the ages. That's what Rothmeyer saw, that's why he said— Why, Alice!"

She was tearing the tea gown with vicious jerks of her strong arm. She was breathing in short gasps. Her eyes were black with anger.

"I shall not wear the rags," she cried heroically. "They—they are the price of shame—of betrayal. I shall not sleep in your house again. Sol Rothmeyer may be able to buy you! He cannot buy me. I'm going—ho-home. Dad was ri-right! He said only bus-bus-business men had any re-re-real sense of hon-hon-honor. I'm going home. Oh, don't touch me!"

But by and by she subsided into weeping upon his shoulder. Then, soothed, placated, she asked:

"A true wife must be willing to sacrifice anything for her husband's chance, mustn't she?"

When she had gone into the bedroom, he sat down with a pipe, a pad, and a pencil. And as he decorated the paper with scrolls and swirls, faces and flowers, after the fashion of the waiters upon literary crystallizations, he muttered:

"Thank God for bromidisms, the soothing sirup for wives, the foundation of happy homes! Thank God for women who have not learned to think, but only to parrot." Then, remorsefully, he tiptoed to the door of the bedroom. Alice slept, her face still tear-stained. The tea gown, pinned together for mending to-morrow, hung on a hook. He smiled and went back to the table.

"The satirist's best friend," Sol Rothmeyer had said, "is a sentimental wife. Her price is above rubies."

Gerald started his new play. He foresaw Broadway blazoned—and Alice in innumerable tea gowns.

## ROMANCE

FULL many years have ripened and grown dim  
 Since first young Paris made of love a flame  
 To kindle hatred in the heart of him  
 Who sought the sacred honor of a name.  
 Full many stars have paled since Romeo  
 Invoked the night to witness, and forget.  
 Where is the love that wrought a nation's woe,  
 Proud Helen's love? The love of Juliet?

Dust unto dust their spirits have returned.  
 Deserted stands the ancient balcony.  
 But something of the wild romance they burned  
 Within their veins still hungers to be free,  
 Where yon pale typist, from a sea of work,  
 Steals wistful glances at the office clerk.

HELEN FRAZEE-BOWER.

# Mardi Gras Confetti

By Marguerite Aspinwall

Author of "The Chameleon," "The Road to Spain," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY T. VICTOR HALL

A story of the kind of love which Sally Lou Blake gave to Sandy Douglas at a Mardi Gras ball in New Orleans. We doubt if Miss Aspinwall has ever written a more charming story.

SARA LOUISE BLAKE ran a pink tongue under the flap of the envelope she held in one hand, wrinkling an ever-so-slightly turned-up nose fastidiously at the unpleasant taste of the glue, and completed the sealing process with an emphatic thump of her fist. Then she reversed the envelope and read the black, rather sprawling address over twice, very slowly, looked in her desk for a stamp, and, failing to find one, tossed the letter into the wire basket containing the office mail.

She paused long enough in the operation of adjusting a trim, little black toque on her red, crisply waving hair to watch an unprepossessing specimen of the genus office boy collect the contents of the basket on his rounds.

Sara Louise sat back in her chair, forgetting the black toque, while a queer, sickening sensation of falling irrevocably, down—down through unexplored depths with no life line handy, seized on her usually steady nerves. A sudden impulse to rush after the boy and retrieve her letter while it was still possible was fought down sternly and with the contempt it deserved.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me, Sally Lou," she inquired aloud—the office being empty for the lunch hour—"just what you really do want, anyway?"

The tone was a faithful reproduction of the rising inflection and well-bred, pained surprise of Grandmother Blake,

in Charleston. Sara Louise—who had never known any more dignified appellation than Sally Lou—gulped with a swift little homesick pang at the sound of the familiar name on her own lips.

"No, I'm glad I sent it. Glad—glad—glad!" she declared decidedly. The twinkle crept back to her eyes, and the corners of her mouth curled up in a wholly contagious grin. Sally Lou was thinking, with the lightning transitions of mood natural to her, of the incongruous appearance of the messenger who had carried off the all-important letter.

"Now, he'd never fit into the picture as Cupid," she mourned, the grin broadening. "Not in a thousand years. I wonder if it's the first love letter he ever carried."

The boy's sullen expression, his mean, shifty, little black eyes, set too near together, and thick-lipped, stupid-looking mouth, rose once more before her, but this time, petulantly, she pushed the thought of him away with a shiver of distaste. She was sorry she had amused herself by picturing him in any possible connection with her letter. It seemed in some inexplicable fashion to lend a disturbing touch of his own sordidness and unloveliness to the momentous decision the letter represented. To forget it, she turned back to the hand mirror propped on her desk, and patted the black toque to just the proper angle, tilting her head critically.



He held out his hand, and Sally Lou put hers in it for the briefest of seconds. She even managed a passable smile, with stiff lips.

A new idea had taken possession of her impulsive brain, and immediately she set about putting it into execution. As a preliminary precaution she did a painful sum in mental arithmetic, and finally, having achieved a fairly reliable answer, nodded her head with satisfaction. Then she gave a thorough brushing to the long, green coat, which was beginning to show the effects of two years' hard wear, criticized it, as she had the black toque, head on one side and gray eyes narrowed, and slipped into it with a faint, regretful breath of a sigh.

She comforted herself a little by the knowledge of its undeniable becomingness when worn with a clear, rose-pink-and-ivory complexion and red hair. Besides, her gray-squirrel furs were not half bad—on the whole.

Descending to the street, Sally Lou turned toward Fifth Avenue and walked north. It was a perfect late-February day—cold, sunny, and still, with a cloudless sky of vividest blue above and pavements underfoot swept clear of the snow which lay in great heaps at intervals along the curb. The crisp tingle in the air brought a warmer

pink to the girl's smooth cheeks, and, unconsciously, her pointed, soft little chin went up to a new, jaunty angle.

Farther along the Avenue she stopped in a shop and bought herself a smart, taupe-gray veil. She was smiling to herself now, for a mirror, as she turned away, had shown her an agreeable reflection of bright-eyed, eager youth behind the new veil, wearing an unmistakable air of breeding and a charm which was partly vivid coloring, but more a certain mobility of expression that made Sally Lou's face a challenge to the most slothful and undeveloped of imaginations—particularly if they happened to be of the masculine sex.

From the veil shop she strolled on north along the Avenue to Fifty-ninth Street, and turned in at the entrance of the largest of the hotels which face the Park. Two minutes later she was seated at one of the most sought-after tables in an already crowded dining room, studying the menu with knitted brows.

Head waiters are merely men, after all, and this one was French to boot, wherefore a smile like Sally Lou's was potent where a tip—and no smile—would have won nothing except the deprecatory announcement that this particular table was engaged. François had made the remark several times already to obviously disappointed lunchers, since he was reserving the table for a certain dyspeptic and elderly millionaire, who might or might not appear to-day, but whose coming was well worth waiting for, as he was apt to be lavish of reward for acceptable suggestions in the matter of diet. And yet, here was Sally Lou Blake, presumably a nobody outside of Pine Hill, Georgia, seated in state and entirely unaware of the miracle wrought.

From afar, François, a snob to his polished boot tips, noted with renewed approval the carriage of the graceful,

red head, and told himself that there were American women who possessed distinction.

The intent fashion in which the girl studied the menu card before giving her order persuaded him, likewise, that the luncheon, solitary though it was, was in the nature of an event, possibly a celebration of sorts. It may be seen that François had a gift of intuition in matters of sentiment more generally supposed to be a feminine than a masculine attribute.

He approached Sally Lou's table and bent over her deferentially, offering a suggestion for a salad, indicating with a smile and a fat forefinger on the card a certain new sweet. Sally Lou lifted gray eyes, serious with the business of decision, to his.

Nobody would have guessed from her sedate little air of being entirely at home in her present surroundings that this was the first meal she had ever had occasion to order in a hotel. Her year in New York had run mostly, she reflected ruefully, to white-front restaurants, with staring plate-glass windows which offered, indecently, the patrons within to the gaze of the hungry or the curious on the pavement.

It was the cheap restaurants and the noise, the maddening, nerve-racking uproar which had finally driven her back, beaten, to the peace of Pine Hill, with its blessed, unhurried, ambitionless leisure—and Bob Farrell.

The New York of her dreams had been a golden, glamorous city—a dream possible only to a very young and ignorant enthusiasm—a place where all sorts of enchanted possibilities beckoned, where romance walked the streets in everyday garb, jostling elbows with everyday people in the crowds. And reality had shown her, relentlessly, a city of loneliness such as she had never, in her friendly, small-town existence, imagined possible.

It had introduced her to the plate-



glass restaurants, to weariness of body and mind and heart—oh, most of all, of heart—finally to an apathetic discouragement which had undermined the will back of her stubborn, rather pathetic little fight for independence.

Now that she had given up, burned her bridges by mailing the letter that morning and resigning her position at the office, Sally Lou had reacquired most of her old optimism of outlook on life in general. A faint roseate hue began to tinge the immediate world about her. The salad amply justified Francois' encomiums, as did also, when she came to it in due course, the much-vaunted sweet.

Sally Lou, who was still young enough to enjoy her lunch with the fresh appreciation of a hungry school-girl, sat back with a little sigh of satisfaction and let her eyes roam more carefully about the crowded room. She was glad she had had that sudden impulse to come here to-day. The gayety of lights—yellow-shaded and warmly glowing—of flowers on all the tables, the babble of many-toned voices pitched in a subdued, subtly exhilarating wave of sound which rose and fell about the barbaric jazz of the hotel orchestra—this was how she had pictured her dream city back in Pine Hill a year ago.

This was the real New York to these people about her, laughing and talking at the little candle-lighted tables. Probably they had all the other things she had dreamed of, too—theaters and dancing and roof gardens, beautiful clothes, and jewels to shine alluringly on slim, white fingers and about slim, white throats.

Sally Lou's suddenly wistful gaze came to attention with a kind of shock on a face she knew in the sea of strange faces surrounding her. Her eyes widened incredulously and the bright color faded abruptly in her cheeks, while the fingers of the hand lying on the table clenched themselves with a tensi-

set little square patches of white about the knuckles.

Across the lights and flowers and chattering voices she continued to stare helplessly, unable to turn away, and attracting, by the very concentration and intentness of her gaze, the thing she most dreaded to have happen.

The person she stared at turned, glanced idly about him, bent forward smilingly in reply to some question of his companion's, and finally, the smile still on his lips, looked up again and straight into Sally Lou's eyes. He was as startled as she; so much was plain. He made an instinctive move as if to rise from his seat, and then sat back, his dark, rather boyish face, with its low forehead, square, well-cut chin, and slightly prominent cheek bones, flushing deeply, almost painfully. There was an odd mingling of eagerness and hesitation in the look he sent across the intervening heads to Sally Lou, sitting very stiff and white and suddenly wretched, at her solitary table, with all her gayety and pretty enthusiasm blown out like a snuffed candle flame.

The girl lowered her eyes to her plate, her heart pounding rebelliously, while the past two years slipped out of her life as if they had never been. She was back in New Orleans at the time of the Mardi Gras. Instead of a New York hotel dining room, she was beholding a kaleidoscope of changing pictures done in vividest coloring—bright lights, flowers, flying confetti, laughing, ardent eyes, and soft voices that whispered enchantment.

She looked down at her blue-serge office dress unseeingly. She was all in misty, palest green, the color of young leaf buds in early spring, with a great sheaf of lilies of the valley and yellow Gloire de Dijon roses in her arms. There had been a lovely old gilt mirror, a thing belonging to the days of the empire, and brought over by some exiled imperialist to the Crescent



She smothered a startled cry against the rough cloth of his shoulder and lay still, clinging to him.

City when France turned against the third Napoleon and his adherents. Sally Lou remembered that mirror very vividly, and how her eyes had smiled back at her, intoxicated with life and her own happiness, from its slightly tarnished frame, across the tops of the flowers in her arms.

The combination of lilies and yellow roses for her first Mardi Gras had been the choice of this man who was watching her with the odd, hesitant eagerness in his eyes, three tables away.

"You're the—most—beautiful—girl in the room to-night, Sally Lou Blake."

It was a tender, drawling voice, speaking out of that two-years-ago "Arabian Nights" magic. If it only wouldn't keep coming back, and back, like that—over and over and *over*. Piercingly sweet; able after all this time to bring that little, breath-taking, wondering thrill and the aftermath of realization, resentment, and hurt pride and heartache.

"You're the most—beautiful girl in the room, Sally Lou Blake." And then, in a caressing, singing breath of a whisper, "Sally Lou Blake—*belovedest*."

They had been engaged for three days, three short gold-and-rose-colored

days, following Mardi Gras night. As she was now engaged to Bob Farrell, or would be when her letter reached Pine Hill some time in the course of to-morrow.

Only there couldn't really be any comparison. Bob had loved her patiently, unswervingly—if a bit unemotionally—since her days of short skirts and schoolbooks. A rock for any sensible girl to build her house of life on, and know it was safe. Whereas Sandy Douglas—she winced away from the mere sound of the name with a sudden little stab of perfectly unreasonable pain—Sandy Douglas had loved her for exactly three days!

It was merely the unexpected sight of Sandy here to-day that had upset her, not any real feeling for him that remained—if the feeling ever had been real, which she was not prepared to admit. It had been just part of the glamour of the carnival, after all, where everything else had been dazzling and quite unreal. A bit of bright-colored confetti left over from the glittering, impossibly beautiful foolery of the Mardi Gras.

For a moment she let herself think about what might have been if they hadn't quarreled at the end of the third day. The quarrel itself had been about some silly trifle scarcely to be remembered now, meaningless and futile as any of the carnival mummeries. It was the hard things they had said to each other that couldn't be forgiven or forgotten; both hot tempers slipping their leashes at the same moment, no self-restraint, no mutual respect and forbearance to hold them back. Between them they had taken a lovely miracle and trampled it ruthlessly into the mire of angry words and recriminations, soiling it irrevocably.

Well, since they could do that, didn't it prove that theirs was only a tinsel counterfeit of love, and, being so, was it not much better for them to have

discovered the truth at once? She had a hundred times bigger chance for happiness with Bob. Dear, clumsy Bob, with his blunt speeches, his kind, blue eyes that always had a special little twinkle for her, and his thoughtful ways which she had let herself take for granted so long that she had lost sight of their value.

Only as late as this morning all this had been quite clear to her. Then what sort of weak-kneed sentimentalist was she to let this unanticipated meeting with Sandy Douglas make her heart beat and her fingers grow cold and nerveless and shake over the simple act of lifting her coffee cup to her lips? At least she hadn't shown anything of what she was feeling, outwardly—or had she?

Fallen into a new panic over the mere possibility. Sally Lou reached blindly for the check and her hand bag. Opening the latter, she thrust the shaky fingers in, groping for the little, tan pigskin purse she always carried. She had spent a good deal more on this absurd lunch of hers than she had intended—three dollars is a pretty stiff price when one has been existing for a year on thirty-five-cent coffee-and-sandwich-at-noon lunches, or, on special occasions, a fifty-cent table d'hôte.

And then her face paled suddenly, for the second time that day. There was no tan pigskin purse in her hand bag. Alert now, her forehead creased in two fine lines of anxiety, she searched again, turning everything over several times; handkerchief, a bit of ribbon for a sample, and several scraps of paper with scribbled memoranda on them.

She shut the bag with a snap and sat up stiffly, her under lip caught with a nervous motion between straight, very white teeth. She must have dropped the purse in the shop where she had bought the taupe veil. Probably she had slipped it outside instead of inside the bag while she was en-

grossed in preening herself like a fool before the big mirror.

From his post near the doorway, François saw her set the bag down and glance about the room rather wildly. He had, on occasions, seen that look on guests' faces before. With a barely perceptible motion of one hand, he dismissed Sally Lou's waiter from the scene and prepared to handle the situation with the diplomacy and the finesse it demanded.

"There is some trouble about the addition, ma'm'selle?"

"A perfectly dreadful thing has happened," said Sally Lou simply. "I have lost my purse."

There was no mistaking the honesty of those worried young eyes.

"Ma'm'selle, do not discompose yourself," François entreated earnestly. "The matter can be arranged. Perhaps ma'm'selle knows some one in the hotel, or lunching here at the moment?"

Sally Lou glanced about the room once more, desperately. But no miracle occurred. Of course, she had known there wouldn't be any one else. How could there be when she didn't know half a dozen people in New York? Her face went very white. She would infinitely have preferred dying to appealing to Sandy Douglas, only one didn't die of even the most acute mortification, and dying wouldn't pay that miserable three-dollar check in any case.

She drew a long breath, like a diver about to plunge, and looked across the room, deliberately, at him. There must have been an appeal in that look of which she was not entirely conscious, for he got abruptly to his feet, a little flame in his dark eyes, and he was standing at her elbow before she had realized that he intended coming over.

He held out his hand, and Sally Lou put hers in it for the briefest of seconds. She even managed a smile, with stiff lips, for the benefit of François, hovering observantly in the offing.

5—Smi.

"Good to see you again, Sally Lou," came the voice she remembered so vividly. The same drawling, low-pitched tones, but holding now no faintest hint of any emotion save a friendly pleasure. "I didn't know you were in town. How's Pine Hill?"

"I've been in New York a year," she said lightly enough—or she hoped so—to pass muster. "I didn't know you were in town, either. How's—how's New Orleans, Sandy?" She stumbled, the tiniest fraction of a stumble, and hated herself with fervor, accordingly. She could feel the pink in her cheeks deepen.

"Funny thing, I've been away from my home town for quite a while, too," he responded conversationally. Had she or had she not caught a flicker of something not impersonal at all in his eyes at the sudden little break in her traitorous voice? She couldn't be positive, and dared not look up again to see.

He laid one hand tentatively on the back of the chair before him.

"Something wrong, Sally Lou?"

"Oh, yes, Sandy!" It was a wail, constraint momentarily forgotten in the more immediate disaster. "I've lost my purse and I've got a dreadful lunch check. I—I——"

Constraint fell from the man likewise, and his lips twitched in a barely suppressed grin. Sally Lou's abrupt transition from tragic aloofness and dignity to childish woe snapped the tension of the situation.

"You—why, you funny little kid," Sandy said in real amusement, and sat down at the table without waiting to be asked. It was then that François displayed the finest workings of his Gallic intuition.

"I observe that monsieur has not drunk his demi-tasse," he remarked, with the air of a rotund and benevolent cherub. "I will, with ma'm'selle's permission, bring it to her table."

He beamed upon them behind their



Sally Lou sat staring at her letter. "I—didn't hurt you after all," she whispered incredulously.

backs, scenting, inevitably, a romance. François approved of romance. He regarded Sandy critically, and was pleased with what he beheld. This young man had distinction as well as the auburn-locked mademoiselle. And the way he looked into her eyes across the table! "Hélas!" sighed François, with sentimental regret for a day that was gone.

"Won't—won't your friends be offended?" Sally Lou faltered. Sandy had been sitting with two other men when she had summoned him away.

"Business deal," he grunted unconcernedly, his eyes still on the girl's flushed face. "Let 'em go hang. Sally Lou——"

"Y-yes, Sandy?"

"What you doing up in New York, h'mm?"

"Working," she said demurely, noting, under her down-dropped lashes, his start of amazement and protest.

An hour ago—half an hour even—she wouldn't have believed they could sit across a table from each other and talk calmly—smile, even, with no slightest touch of constraint to mar a quite evident enjoyment of the situation on both sides. In some curious, inexplicable fashion, the little incident of the lost purse had bridged the gap with no other aid than a laugh shared and the unpremeditated speaking of each other's names.

Sandy bent nearer.

"Was it—do you *have* to work?" he asked, frowning. "In New Orleans—I mean you seemed so carefree——"

"Oh, well, in New Orleans I was visiting!" Sally Lou reminded him airily. "But, to be honest, I reckon I came North because I wanted to try out the free-and-independent-bachelor-girl idea. My family didn't approve, and now that I've tried it, I'm-willing to confess there's not much in it."

"Then—then——" he began eagerly.

"Yes, I've given up," she said. "I'm going home next week," she added—with a little throb of malicious triumph in the sudden knowledge that the words would wound—"to be married."



He was very quiet at that, his face all at once white under its olive tan.

"Look at me," he said gently.

Defiantly she raised her eyes.

"Who to, Sally Lou?" he wanted to know, still in that quiet, controlled voice which was new to her.

"A—man back home. We went to high school together, and he used to carry my books for me. You know, just like the conventional beginnings of all love stories!" with forced flippancy.

"Oh!" he commented dryly. "I see. In—in love with him, Sally Lou?"

"Yes," she said, with rather more emphasis than was needed, and realized it too late.

"That," said Sandy Douglas, out of the little silence which succeeded, "is a lie, Sally Lou Blake. That's not a pretty word to use to a lady, of course, but everything worth having in both our lives is at stake. Do you really think that I'm going to let the other man have you now? Why didn't he prevent your running away to New York? He had you in Pine Hill; why wasn't he man enough to keep you?"

"That doesn't come awfully well from you," Sally Lou pointed out deliberately, her eyes hard. "You weren't so very good at keeping me yourself."

"I've had two years to realize I played the fool," he retorted. "I've realized all right," he went on grimly. "But I'm of the stubborn sort that will die before owning themselves wrong. You are yourself. Red-headed people mostly are, I understand. If we hadn't met to-day, by chance, probably we'd both have gone to our graves without giving in, married the wrong mates, as you're planning to do, and, inside us, eaten our hearts out for each other all the while. Of course, I can only speak with certainty for myself, yet I'm almost as sure it's true of you. Your eyes gave you away just now, Sally Lou—*belovedest*."

It was suddenly the night of the

Mardi Gras ball again, the old glamour and enchantment. Her glance met his in a swift, misty glory of surrender, and, under cover of the table's edge, Sandy's hand found and closed over hers fiercely, possessively.

"Here," said Sandy, triumph in eyes and voice, "is where the man from home gets off—and stays there."

Sally Lou jerked her hand out of his and sat up very straight, her eyes wide and miserable.

"Oh-h, Sandy, I'd forgotten!" she said forlornly.

Sandy, by a strategic move, recaptured the hand he had been holding.

"Keep on forgetting everything but that you're going to marry me," he said. His fingers tightened over hers.

"Remember the last time I held your hand, Sally Lou?" he asked, very low.

"Don't," she said sharply. "It's—oh, why did you come too late? I've told Bob I—care for him. I thought I did. I thought I'd forgotten our Mardi Gras madness, Sandy."

"But you haven't, you see," he reminded her quietly. "You've got to face it, Sally Lou. You don't love this other man, no matter how long you've known him or how many times he's carried your books home from school. And you do love me. So it follows I'm the one you're going to marry. It's—eh—unfortunate for Bob that you've led him to believe otherwise, but you owe him the truth first of all."

"I can't, Sandy," Sally Lou said stonily. "It's not the way it was with—with us two years ago—a quarrel and hot tempers and both of us to blame. Bob's very serious and—and *literal*. I've always known he was in love with me, but it's never made any difference in our friendship, and as long as he understood I could only give him that, it was all fair and square on both sides. Then, before I came North he asked me to marry him. He hadn't much hope, he explained, but—well, he sort



of thought I might like to remember, if I was ever homesick and things went wrong, that he was there waiting and that he'd never change. I told him I loved him for telling me, but I wasn't in love with him, and we'd better go on just being friends. He didn't say anything more then, but in every letter I've had from him since he's added a postscript—"I'm still waiting round, Sally Lou, if you ever want to signal me."

"You'd better let me hear the rest," Sandy said harshly. His mouth was set, thin-lipped, in a hard line.

Sally Lou looked up at his tone, the pointed, soft, young chin quivering.

"I didn't think you could care still," she said, "and I was so tired and discouraged—oh, you don't know what it's been, Sandy!—and then Bob wrote, and there was the same postscript, and—and all at once that seemed to be the answer. I liked him so much and trusted him. It was easy to let myself believe that was love. Not the kind we—well, I realize now I've been a fool once more, but this time I've got to do the paying. I wrote Bob only this morning, and told him I was going home because—because I'd found out I cared for him. If I hadn't said I cared——" She set her teeth firmly upon the trembling of her lip.

"And what about me?" Sandy demanded unhappily.

"You and I"—Sally Lou said it unsteadily—"threw love away two years ago like spoiled children angry with a broken toy, and I reckon we've got to pay now. It mustn't be Bob. I'm not a quitter. I've never been one—yet."

She gathered herself and her possessions—furs, gloves, the hand bag—together and pushed back her chair.

"I'll have to be getting back to the office," she said in a voice that had a disarming little break in it.

"Just a minute. There's this check of yours to settle," Sandy reminded her.

She sat down again, obediently, but her expression was doubtful. Plainly she was inclined to be suspicious of his abrupt change from masterful assurance to this matter-of-fact acquiescence to her decision. He reached in his pocket for his wallet, selected a bill, which he handed to the waiter, and, without glancing again at Sally Lou, continued to finger the wallet's contents deliberately, producing, at last, a tiny, rather soiled, white envelope, card size, from an inner compartment.

"Hold out your hand and shut your eyes!" he commanded flippantly.

Sally Lou complied in part; she did not trouble to be literal in the matter of shutting her eyes, but she did hold her hand out, palm up. She turned the envelope uncertainly between finger and thumb tips, with a puzzled smile.

"Meant to be opened," Sandy advised her casually.

His face told her nothing at all. He was merely watching her with grave attention. She inserted a finger under the flap and ripped it open slowly.

Into her small, pink palm ran a gaudy little stream of pink and green and blue and deep purple confetti, with a handful of shriveled, yellow rose petals, still exhaling a faint scent that was not so much the smell of actual roses as the vague, elusive breath of the Mardi Gras itself.

"You——" began Sally Lou, and swallowed hard on a lump in her throat that was hurting horribly. "I'm—I'm going now," she ended shakily.

Sandy rose and followed her without a word.

At the hotel entrance he hailed a taxi and, ignoring Sally Lou's rather feeble protests, helped her in and got in after her. They rode in silence for a few minutes, and then Sandy bent down and laid his hand over his companion's.

"Remember, I—love you, Sally Lou," he said simply. It was the ultimate

plea. If that failed, then nothing else he could advance as argument counted.

A hoarse shout of warning just outside the taxi window broke in upon the tenseness of the moment and, before the two inside could look up, there was a splintering of glass, a jar, and a crash. The taxi tilted over, quite slowly, on the two wheels on Sandy's side and brought up, at a drunken angle, against a corner lamp-post.

The force of the impact flung Sally Lou headlong into Sandy's arms. She smothered a startled cry against the rough cloth of his shoulder and lay still, clinging to him. Even in the sudden fright, she was conscious of thinking that it was worth dying for—if they were about to die, which she fully believed at the moment—to be held like this in his arms once more. And in the same instant she also knew that, promise or no promise, she could never marry Bob Farrell, waiting trustingly down in Georgia.

There are women who can change their love, conveniently, with time and opportunity, as they might change an outgrown frock, but there are also others who, once having given love—worthily or not, that matters nothing—have given all they possess, never to be called back again; and it was this kind of love that Sally Lou Blake had given to Sandy Douglas at a Mardi Gras ball.

Outside their tipsy cab a crowd had gathered instantly, out of nowhere, as is the habit of New York crowds, and a dozen willing hands opened the taxi's door on the uninjured side and helped the two passengers out. At a little distance the big dray that had caused the damage was surrounded by another group. A policeman, appearing on the scene with notebook and pencil, took everybody's names indiscriminately and shooed them impatiently out of his way, like intrusive flies.

Sandy and Sally Lou managed to be shooed with the rest, and disappeared

around the nearest corner, where, safely out of sight and hearing of the law, they stopped and faced each other.

"Do you know what I thought at the moment the crash came?" Sandy demanded. "I thought—it's all over, and we've never lived. We've missed life."

"Look here," he went on, almost roughly. "You think you're doing the honorable thing and all that, keeping your word to that chap in Pine Hill. But in your heart you know, just as well as I know, that you're doing him an injury, something a whole life of lies with him—which is what it would have to be if he wasn't to know—would never make up for. You're planning to cheat him of the real thing that some other girl may be able to give him in the future. That's straight, Sally Lou. There's only one way out of the tangle; marry me, here in New York, tomorrow. Then I'll take you down to Pine Hill to see your people, and after that—my job here is done now—we'll go home to New Orleans. There's a little brick house with white balconies in the old French quarter that came to me from my mother's family. You'll love it, dear; I remember you pointed out a house like it to me once, a 'fairytale place' was what you called it. You see, I've remembered everything you ever said or cared about. And, Sally Lou, in two weeks it will be the Mardi Gras down there again."

"Give me till to-morrow to—to think," Sally Lou whispered, terribly afraid, all at once, that she was going to cry in the street and disgrace both Sandy and herself. Her heart was hammering madly, and there was a blur before her eyes. "I'm going home. I couldn't face the office now. I'll think—all night, and meet you at noon to-morrow. You—don't try to talk any more, Sandy. I can't bear it."

He let her go then, his face very tender.

"I bring you nothing but worries,"

he said whimsically. "Perhaps you'd really have been better off with that Bob What's-his-name down in Georgia, if you hadn't met me first."

"No!" Sally Lou flashed it at him vehemently. "I'd only have missed—living."

A night of tossing, wide-eyed and with nerves strung taut, brought no light on the decision confronting her. She was alternately shaken by remorseful tears at the thought of Bob Farrell's face when he should read her letter in the morning and plunged into a strangely mixed gloom and ecstasy at the knowledge that she would be powerless, will-less to-morrow before Sandy's smile and the homesick urging of her own heart. Only it wasn't fair that Bob should be the one to suffer. Bob wasn't to blame for any of the perplexing tangle she had made of life.

She rose, white-faced and weary, at daybreak, and sat in her heavy wrapper at the window, staring at the dirty, snow-filled street outside until it was time to dress and go downtown, her decision still unmade.

At the office she ran into a knot of chattering girls in the entrance to the stenographic department. Snatches of their talk drifted over to her.

"Right under our noses," she caught, and then, from several of the girls, emphatically: "Little thief—dirty. East Side——" She lost the rest in the squeaking of her desk top as she raised it.

"What's the row?" she asked finally, because something seemed to be required of her at this point.

Miss Benson, pink-cheeked and fluffy, came over to sit on her desk and swing her patent-leather heels.

"It's that little, rat-eyed office boy, Julius; the one that handles the mail, you know," she said. "Imagine! He's been stealing stamps for weeks—not stamping part of each day's mail. Jimmy Keswick went rummaging

through his desk last night looking for a folder he'd given him, and he found literally dozens of letters all crammed down under an old box in the bottom drawer. The kid's evidently wise to being found out, for he didn't show up this morning. And—why, by the way, I recognized a letter addressed in your hand among 'em, and told Jimmy to lay it on your desk, in case you wanted to add anything explaining the delay. There's no knowing how long it's been lying round. I couldn't help seeing the address was to a man—in your home town, I think."

Her light, chattering voice seemed to come to Sally Lou from a long, long way off. The whole office was dark and whirling sickeningly in a dizzy merry-go-round. Dimly she heard the gay, little voice go on, unconcernedly, a stream of meaningless words, ejaculations, and trills of laughter.

Then a letter was dropped on the desk before her, and Miss Benson swung herself down to the floor and was yawning lazily, both plump, bare young arms stretched above her head. Watching her, Sally Lou was moved to wonder, quite angrily, how any one could be unaware that a miracle had happened and a whole new world had been born. She took up the crumpled envelope fearfully and waited until, very slowly, the room stopped spinning and she could read. Miss Benson went away, and still Sally Lou sat, staring at her letter.

"I—didn't hurt you, after all," she whispered to it, incredulously, out of a relief so vivid it was almost pain.

She slipped her fingers into the pocket of her green coat and touched a handful of old confetti and some shriveled, yellow petals that had once been Gloire de Dijon roses.

All the candles of the carnival were alight in Sally Lou's gray eyes.

"Oh, Sandy!" she said in a hushed, little voice. "Oh, Sandy!"

# *In the Presence of the Master*

By Dorothy Brodhead

ILLUSTRATED BY H. T. DENISON

**Sometimes an artist finds genuine appreciation at an unsuspected source. You will be interested in this experience of Mark Hazlitt's.**

THE Black Mountain local made its way slowly through dirty mining towns and over coal-grimed hills. And, in its course ahead, the bridge over Stony Brook was broken.

There had been snow and ice left over from the winter when the thawing February rains began. Promptly Stony Brook had risen to celebrate, thinking that spring-freshet time had arrived ahead of schedule. Its maddened current would have borne the trestle away bodily had not the rain abated somewhat the middle of the previous afternoon. As it was, the sullen, subsiding waters left a strengthless skeleton spanning their course.

Moving toward it across the desolate landscape, wholly unconscious of its peril, the Black Mountain local was bringing Mark Hazlitt home. Mark Hazlitt's home-coming was a matter of importance only to those who waited for him, and had it mattered less to them he would not have been coming at all. For, year after year, returning for his annual visit, he found this last lap of his journey becoming more unbearable. The cars were invariably filled with coarse, uncleanly miners, and his delicate, crippled body was racked to agony by the convulsive jerkings of the rickety cars.

Forty miles back, at the last station of any consequence, a diversion had come aboard, but it was of the sort which annoyed him more than it entertained him. It was a feminine passen-

ger, an enterprising one, whose eager, shining glance had instantly set to work overhauling the other travelers, with frank indifference to the feminine portion, but candid hopefulness for the males.

Hazlitt, watching, decided that she wore her clothes for no practical use on earth. A mite of a veil descended from her small hat to the tip of her nose, but its only purpose seemed to be to hold down a black beauty patch at the corner of her eye. She wore heavy furs, but the muff dangled loosely from her wrist and the neck piece lay loosely across her shoulders, making no effort to meet across the wide V of uncovered flesh below her throat.

He continued to view her, from time to time, disapprovingly, long after she had discarded the fur and the muff and the veil. Then it finally became apparent to her that he was noticing her, when, while plainly unaware of the quality of that notice, she became very obviously gratified because he was a man and because he did look at her.

Thereupon, flushing, his attention returned rigidly to his periodical. Thirty-eight years of living with a deformity had convinced him that the feminine sex, slow to forgive a masculine face for colorless delicacy, is slower still to forgive a masculine form for a halting limp.

His eyes, behind their big, tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles, did not again leave the retreat of his pages until, with a

harsh crushing of brakes and a terrified shudder which shook the decrepit cars to a standstill, the Black Mountain local stood motionless, shivering in the wet, steaming twilight.

No one failed to detect the hysterical note of danger. Every one made a pass for the door and crowded down the outside steps. Hazlitt went last, because, true to caution, he waited to don his hat and overcoat. His common sense told him that whatever had threatened had been averted, while the chill and dampness held a threat of pneumonia as deadly as any other.

At last, he descended the car steps and limped forward along the track. Between the engine and the powerless Stony Brook trestle lay the salvation of a scant ten-foot space. There were no danger signals in evidence. Hazlitt took it all in at a glance and knew that some warning instinct must have blessed the man at the throttle. Death that had been cheated snarled at him from the frothing current, and Hazlitt, with his eyes traveling appraisingly out along the stark, faithless outline of the bridge, was conscious of an overwhelming reverence, like a voiceless prayer.

"Well, dog-gone these one-horse railroads, anyhow!" The words were in such contrast to his thoughts that they startled and stung and angered him all at once. He knew, before he looked, that it was the feminine passenger who had last come aboard, and, since he was the nearest person at hand, he supposed her remark was intended for a conversational opening, which he deliberately refused to seize.

Turning, he walked slowly back the way he had come, and found the conductor standing alongside the empty coaches, surrounded by a querulous, questioning crowd. His voice was rising indignantly above the clamor.

"How do I know yet what can be done about it? I'll do my best; I promise you that. Wallach station is only

a mile back, and from there I can wire headquarters. I suppose they'll send a special crew right out to put the bridge into temporary shape, but you can see for yourselves that there ain't no way to get through to Preston to-night. Better all hunt up sleeping quarters in Wallach village. All aboard, everybody, and we'll run her back into the station."

There were complaints on every hand. Hazlitt alone seemed to take the matter calmly, and he, also, soon found something to disturb him. The "something" was the female passenger and his recollection that she was quite alone in this unpleasant situation. He knew, with a disquieting sense of duty, that, despite her attempted sophistication, she was undoubtedly very, very young, indeed.

His eyes roamed hopefully over the inmates of the car, when he returned, hoping to see some one likely to assume a position as guardian in the matter, but there was only the unkempt, masculine element which he had noted earlier in the trip and a few weary-looking miners' wives, with many babies.

The girl herself returned, jauntily unaware of any personal predicament, and all the way back into the station Hazlitt refrained from approaching her in the hope that some new turn of events would exempt him from the necessity. Finally, however, when the train had halted and the other boisterous members of the car were collecting their baggage and crowding out, he rose and limped across to where she still sat, a perplexed little frown between her brows.

"My name is Hazlitt," he began pleasantly, "and I am introducing myself because I think you may need my services."

The quality of her uplifted glance made him conclude grimly that, at sixteen, even a lame man is preferable to none at all.



Hazlitt, watching, decided that she wore her clothes for no practical use on earth.

"You are very kind," she said, plainly using her best manners. Then she stopped, evidently not knowing what sort of service she should expect him to perform.

"Shall I undertake to find you suitable lodgings in the village? We are certainly stranded here for the night, and there is no sleeper on the train. I am afraid the hotel is very poor. I was brought up among these mining towns, and I know the sort of hotels they have. If you will content yourself here with some reading matter, I'll go out and see if I can find some private family who will take you in."

"Oh, yes!" she agreed amiably. "But can't I go with you to look for a place? You see, I've been reading all afternoon, and I don't care much for books."

He glanced at her foolish periodical, which he had not seen her even trying to read, and then out of the window.

"I may have to walk a good bit. I think you had better wait here. Here are some of my magazines. Perhaps you haven't seen *them*." His firmness was evident, and she did not attempt to reverse his decision.

But when he returned, a half hour later, he found her standing outside, on the station platform, taking a silent, but lively interest in all who came and went. And, frankly displeased, he hurried back into the car to collect her baggage.

"I've found a nice place for you," he informed her when he came out. "It is with an elderly lady who lives alone and uses a couple of extra sleeping rooms that she has to board strangers now and then."

He left her presently in the old lady's neat little parlor. But fate did not permit him to shift the burden of his responsibility as easily as he had planned.



For, by the time he had dispatched telegrams to the girl's people and his own, he reached the hotel only to find its meager capacity exhausted by fellow travelers stranded like himself. Momentarily, he questioned the propriety of his simplest course of action. Then a practical survey of the situation, including his bad leg and the rainy weather, produced the common-sense decision to return and engage the old lady's other vacant room.

And so it occurred that, when the simple, well-cooked supper was eaten, he and the girl confronted the evening alone together. She stood by the window trying to see out through the drizzle.

"Is it too rainy to go out and see the town?" she inquired.

"Oh, yes! Anyway, the town isn't worth seeing."

She came back to the fire and sat down, restlessly unhappy.

"I might have been having a dandy time now, if that bridge had only stood the racket."

Hazlitt did not remind her how obviously she was showing him that his own company was not interesting her. Instead, he inquired:

"Where were you going?"

"To my brother's wedding. He took charge of the Preston mine two years ago. Now he is marrying some girl he met there."

"And when does the ceremony take place?"

"To-morrow night."

"Oh, you will get there all right!" he encouraged. "If the train shouldn't be able to get through to-morrow, perhaps we can find some other means."

"I hope so. I just love weddings," she added ardently.

Hazlitt looked at her.

"I can believe that you do," he agreed, but the irony of his agreement was concealed in kindly politeness.

"My mother went last week, so as to

help. I could have gone then, too, if it hadn't been for my school." She said this last resentfully.

Her tone brought forth his next question.

"Don't you like your school?"

"No."

Having delivered her reply, she sat inert in her little, low chair before the flames. Hazlitt studied her lazily. Not that he found her in any way a problem. From the moment his eyes had run over the surface of her, he had known there was nothing but surface to be explored. Now he was only pondering languidly whether or not there was anything worth while in her shallow make-up, and if so, if contact with any good thing would awaken it.

"So you don't like books nor high school. What do you like?"

"Oh, I like to go—and keep going!"

"I see. But I meant isn't there some kind of work that you like best? Haven't you a hobby, such as painting or music or embroidery?"

"Oh, yes! That is—I love pictures!" There was a new enthusiasm in her eyes.

"What kind of pictures do you like?"

"Well, I like them with some 'pep.' Pretty-girl pictures, too, have it all over scenery and cows and things like that, I think. I suppose, if I could paint, I'd do magazine covers. But the things I'd always be wanting to do, and never be able to, would be things like Silas Jest paints—things that aren't too high and mighty for the numskulls to enjoy, and yet with a kind of charm, I suppose it is, underneath the picture itself, that makes even the highbrows rave. Do you know what I mean?"

Hazlitt was thoughtful.

"Why, yes—I believe I do," he groped.

"My father gave me a picture for Christmas," she went on. "It is an original of Jest's, and I never had a

real picture before. My others are reproductions, magazine covers framed, and like that." Hazlitt mentally patted her father approvingly on the back. "I've got this one with me; it isn't very big. I'll show it to you to-morrow. It is just a bit of woods and a brook and a girl—the sort of girl Jest is sure to tuck into a picture if he puts in any at all. 'Old-fashioned girls,' my father calls them, but they certainly don't look anything like the scarecrows in our family album. They look the way I'd like to look." And, as though the thought wakened some slumbering annoyance, she frowned. "Now, why couldn't that trestle have held together and let me get there to-night?"

Her thoughts were as lucid as though she wrote them across her person.

"You think you would have been looking at your best at this time to-night, if you'd reached the end of your journey," Hazlitt translated. "And just what do you suppose you'd have been doing now?"

She flushed guiltily beneath her rouge.

"They'll be having a party to-night. The intimate guests will mostly have got there. And three of my brother's classmates are expected. None of them is married, and they're all quite famous. One is an engineer—who builds bridges that don't fall down when it rains—and one is a writer, and one is a mayor."

Hazlitt smiled at her conception of the word "famous," but she was visualizing the house party in the fire glow and did not see the smile.

"I've got a stunning new evening gown," she continued. Then, all in a rush: "I suppose you would consider it very unladylike in me to hope it, but I hoped it just the same—that one of those men would be making a fuss over me this very minute." She stopped defiantly, but she added wistfully, "It would be great to tell the girls, if a real celebrity did."

Hazlitt smiled lazily. He was wondering just what, to her immature reasoning, constituted a "fuss." He wished a strange thing for him; he wished that he were the sort of man to be able to find out. He leaned forward interestedly, taking off his glasses, so that only a red mark across the top of his nose betrayed the fact that they had ever disfigured his face, and even that called attention to the fact that his dark eyes were deep and fine.

"I am reaping the benefit of what those other men are missing," he said.

She looked up at him quickly, saw that it was not in mockery—for she sensed that he disapproved of her—and smiled.

He waited pleasantly, while behind the mask of his smile was the grim assurance that had he been six feet tall, dark, and with a dimple in his chin, her smile would have been more alert than it was.

"But you are missing a part," she objected archly, all her youthful sophistication insufficient to conceal her juvenile self-consciousness. "You are missing seeing me in my evening gown and fancy hairdress. And I," she added, lapsing into despondency, "am missing the time of my life."

"I suppose a gay time is your idea of a perfect evening," he suggested dryly, after a pause.

"What else could it be?" she rejoined flippantly.

"Well," he parried—and then running mentally back over her few disjointed admissions—"you said you loved pictures so much that I thought perhaps the most beautiful time of all might be just looking quietly at a great many lovely ones."

"Oh, yes!" she said, and stopped. Plainly this was not the type of man with whom she could be at ease.

But she was good-naturedly willing to help along the conversation.

"Would you like to have me show

you my picture? The original I told you about, by Silas Jest?"

"Yes, but I dislike to trouble you to go upstairs for it."

"Oh, I don't mind that! I am never so happy as when I am going somewhere. I wish it were ten times as far."

Hazlitt smiled wryly.

She came back slowly, carrying a very small canvas.

He rose courteously and came forward to look at it.

"Of course," she apologized regretfully, "it is one of Jest's earlier and poorer ones, or my father wouldn't have been able to afford it."

"It is very pretty, though," Hazlitt complimented awkwardly, not knowing what else to say.

"It is adorable." She warmed to the tribute. "I've wanted something by him more than anything else in the world for months and months. I'm crazy about him!"

Her eyes were upon the canvas, but he divined that, beneath her lowered lashes, that almost holy reverence was again in their depths. And suddenly she lifted them, and he saw to a certainty that it was.

"Oh," she breathed, "if I ever, ever could learn to paint like that!"

His voice was subdued, huskily tender. "Have you ever tried?"

"Oh, I've daubed, but that is all! At home they call me a rattlebrains,



The girl beside them was openly in tears. Hazlitt

and mother worries every day of her life for fear I'll never have any sense. But I *do* know some things! I know enough to know that I'll never paint—that way. My brother doesn't know that much. He thinks he's going to be able to write novels, and I wish you'd hear his stuff! He got his leg shot off in the war, and now he thinks he can turn his hand to some kind of work that doesn't need legs—right off the bat, without half trying."

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently, and Hazlitt marveled at that little canny current of wisdom in the sea of her vain young folly.

"Well, of course, all people who do things well have done them poorly at first. And they've all had to form their



looked slowly from the boy to her.

own particular methods. I don't suppose Horte or Lyman or Jest, any of them, go about painting in the same way."

She narrowed her eyes.

"I've seen photographs of them all." And it was as if she were seeing them still. "Those of Horte and Lyman were just plain photos, but the one of Jest showed him in his studio at work. He was wearing a Norfolk suit, tweed or mixed goods of some sort, belted in. And he was sitting in front of his easel leaning forward, all wrapped up in the thing he was painting. I don't blame him. If I could paint things like that, I'd never take my eyes off from them."

Hazlitt smiled at her enthusiasm.

"But tell me about your brother," he urged gently, changing the subject.

She was perfectly willing to talk about herself and her affairs. She put the canvas on the table with lingering tenderness, and sat down.

"Oh, we had a terrible time when he went across! Mother cried for a week after he went. But I had made him promise to get his best-looking soldier friends to write to me, and he did, so, of course, I wrote to them. I was all the time fixing boxes and things to send across. The girls were all so jealous they didn't know which way to look."

She paused for breath.

"And this brother—is he the one who is going to be married?" asked Hazlitt.

"Oh, no, this is my oldest brother! It was the young one who got his leg shot off. He is so different since it happened—so kind of useless. It's horrid! No one in our family has ever been lame before, and I can't get used to it."

There was silence after that. The thoughtless thing she had said was so flagrantly cruel that even Hazlitt, injured by half a lifetime to deformity, could not speak.

As for the girl, she sat reflectively silent, busy, no doubt, with her own shallow, little thoughts. Then she rose abruptly and took her canvas.

"I think I'll go to bed," she said softly. "Good night."

He could hear her going up the stairs.

and, drawing his own chair within the glow of the green-shaded kerosene lamp on the table, he settled himself for an hour's reading.

When he was at last ready to go up, he stood a moment peering out into the night. The wind was changing, bustling in from the northwest.

By morning, when the girl, as impudently modern in appearance as she had been the day before, faced him across the breakfast table, the sun had completed the miracle of clearing and was smiling on a raw, drenched world.

"You said we would take a chance on getting through to Preston to-day," was her observation, crowding close upon her casual "good morning."

"Yes," he agreed. "As soon as we are through breakfast we will walk down to the station and see what prospect there is of a train."

"I can go with you this time." She made no effort to conceal her eagerness to be on the move.

He nodded, then added, induced by a fleeting memory of her attire yesterday: "Dress yourself warmly, because it has turned quite cold!"

She went upstairs promptly after completing her breakfast, and came down prepared for the jaunt, her feet shod in thin-soled, high-heeled pumps which showed no expectation of rubbers. Hazlitt looked at them. Then, wearily, but unprotestingly, he proceeded to put on his overcoat.

The streets of the village offered poor walking facilities, but she managed to keep her footing easily, even gracefully, and always two or three paces in advance of Hazlitt.

At the station they found no prospect of a mended trestle before evening. Hazlitt was for waiting the few necessary hours, but the girl's impatience and exasperation at this suggestion were sufficient to carry all obstacles before them.

"Can't we hire a car somewhere? Who wants to sit in this poky burg all day? There isn't even a decent movie show. I've seen every picture advertised on the signboard for to-day. I was looking them over while you were finding out about the trains."

"But I wonder if the roads are fit for traveling by machine," Hazlitt pondered. "We *could* get stranded in some place worse than this."

"Oh, piffle! It is only twenty miles. An automobile could make it all right. Won't you try to hire one—please?"

"I am afraid it won't be wise, but if you will wait here, I'll step into one of these stores and inquire the condition of the roads."

When he came out, she had discovered a suitor, and she exhibited him proudly.

"Mr. Hazlitt, meet Mr. Merton."

Hazlitt gravely shook hands with a long, lank, beardless youth who was too much embarrassed to explain his connection in the matter.

The girl, however, immediately undertook to do this for him.

"I saw Mr. Merton sitting in a machine, and I thought he might know all about the roads, so I asked him. He says they aren't bad."

The boy was devouring the brilliant bit of artificiality with eyes which were too youthful to be critical. Hazlitt did not have the look of one altogether ready to accept Mr. Merton's opinion as expert, but before he could gather together the substance of a response, that small image of femininity had done its work upon the boy's gallantry.

"I'll drive you over to Preston," he committed himself recklessly. "We can drive up three miles and cross the river at the Pittsville bridge."

"Oh, how lovely of you!" said the girl.

Hazlitt knitted his brows.

"Do you feel reasonably sure that you can make the trip in safety?"

"Oh, yes!" The youth withdrew his worshipful eyes from the idol long enough to reply. "I've driven over several times this winter."

"But this part of the country has *no* really good roads, and after this storm they can't help but be worse."

"The roads are a little rough, but the mud won't be bad."

"Oh, please, Mr. Hazlitt, do come with us!" This from the feminine vision. Then she intended to go whether he did or not.

"Is this the car?" he inquired of the new and obviously preferred knight. He was indicating a runabout of ancient design, with a rumble seat perched high up in the rear.

"Yes, this is mine."

Hazlitt continued to eye the runabout dubiously. The girl was frankly quivering with impatience at his delay. Ah, well, as she had said before, it was only twenty miles! Perhaps they could manage to get that far.

"Very well. I'll go with you, but you must promise to drive slowly and carefully. And you will have to take us around to our boarding place first and let us get our luggage."

It was a foregone conclusion that Hazlitt would be the one to sit on the rumble seat. He was. The girl snuggled contentedly in beside the youthful driver, and the ancient conveyance rattled off.

It did not require long to gather up their luggage and pay their bill. Hazlitt then arranged the girl's suit case in the bottom of the car, which left no room for his own large hand bag. This he proceeded to wedge firmly between the hood and mud guard, and then climbed slowly onto his perch.

Their vehicle groaned and banged its way out of the village, and Hazlitt, perched high up on that rumble seat, kept his doubts to himself. He looked silently down upon the silly, enamored

pair below him, but he chose to remember the one moment that he had seen glory in the girl's eyes, and the one grain of wisdom which had come from between the rouged lips. Some time the flame of her great passion might burn away the dross! Meanwhile, her voice came to him:

"Here is a decent stretch of road. Drive faster. I love to go fast."

Increased speed instantly sent the cold air rushing past Hazlitt's head. They approached a railroad crossing at such furious speed that Hazlitt knew it would be impossible to stop, and so hoped intensely that there was no approaching train. There was one, but somewhere in the distance. The ancient gate tender was laboriously beginning to lower the striped gate when the lumbering conveyance came racing along. The descending gate threatened Hazlitt, in his exposed position, with annihilation, and he had to clasp his hat to his head and duck sharply to dodge the blow. Both unconscious of and indifferent to his discomforts and wishes, the foolish pair beneath him simpered enthusiastically. The boy drove rashly to prove himself the hero that he wasn't. Hazlitt was tossed about accordingly on his perch until his crippled leg was tortured beyond endurance. The smell of gasoline assailed his sensitive nostrils. He leaned forward.

"You don't suppose this jouncing has sprung a leak in your gasoline tank?" he questioned.

The boy was trying to catch some treasure from the rouged lips.

"Oh, no!" he called back impatiently. "I often smell gasoline!"

Hazlitt eyed the road ahead. He felt uneasy in his position. He would be sincerely glad when all of that oncoming road lay behind him. They rushed through a lake of a mud puddle, which spattered high, deluging Hazlitt's immaculate hand bag in its exposed posi-



tion and even reaching him in his equally immaculate overcoat.

He watched the villages come and go. Really, they were getting on with this trip, but his lame leg was shot through and through with excruciating twinges of pain.

The odor of gasoline, constantly assailing his nostrils, took on added pungency. He leaned forward again.

"You are sure your gasoline tank is all right?"

"Sure. Don't let that bother you. This car is all to the good."

The girl, annoyed at the interruption, cast him a fleeting glance of contempt and pity for his nervousness.

Hazlitt again viewed the flying landscape until they approached the outskirts of Preston City.

Again that sharp odor of gasoline. Then suddenly—flames. Flames that sprang up about them everywhere.

The car stopped promptly. The two in the seat below leaped out, the girl with a series of little, staccato squeals. Leaping was impossible for Hazlitt's anatomy, but his movements were swift, and he descended rapidly, reathing the wet road in safety. With quiet presence of mind he hobbled forward and grasped his hand bag.

"Step back!" he ordered the boy, who was hovering helplessly close to his rapidly perishing possession.

From behind them came a wail.

"And my suit case—with the only painting I have in the world."

"I'll get it for you," said the boy.

But Hazlitt interfered.

"Don't venture near it," he repeated. "Come away—farther. That's it." For the whole framework was in flames now, burning frantically.

Hazlitt, with his life and possessions saved, watched it calmly.

The boy, clenching and unclenching his fists, watched it, too.

"Dad won't ever trust me with another one," he said.

The speech brought Hazlitt to a sharp realization of just what this loss really meant to the boy. He reached for his wallet and extricated two clean, new bills. They constituted a ridiculously extravagant fee for bringing two passengers from Wallach village, but he gave them to the boy cheerfully, even insisted that they be accepted.

During this proceeding the girl beside them was openly in tears.

"I'll get more clothes, I suppose, after I've waited long enough, but I don't know when I'll ever get another picture."

Hazlitt looked slowly from the boy to her. She had ignored him almost to the point of insult; by her indifference she denied the existence of any charm in his masculinity. But he could not forget that one moment when he had seen adoration in her eyes—adoration that was *for him*; that had sent its healing warmth to the roots of his soul. So human is the longing for appreciation!

He stooped suddenly in the muddy road and unfastened his bag. He dug to where a canvas lay flat on the very bottom, and, without explanation, handed it to her.

"You may have this, to replace that other one," he said.

It was fresh canvas, undeniably new, and it contained a bright glimpse into an old-fashioned garden, with a girl on an old-fashioned garden bench—such a girl as could have been created by but one unmistakable hand.

"Oh!" she breathed. "Oh!" And reverence spread into her voice. "It is Silas Jest's! I never saw that one of his before."

Hazlitt smiled.

"No one has," he said gently, "except himself." And he added, "Silas Jest, you know, is not his real name."



LOLA FISHER  
who plays *Belinda*  
with great charm.

# NEW YORK STAGES SUCCESSSES

## "Honors Are Even"

A COMEDY

By Roi Cooper Megrue

Author of "Tea for Three," etc.



WILLIAM COURTENAY  
is a handsome, debonair John Leighton.

TO Belinda Carter, from the moment she makes her first beautiful bow to society, life is just one series of devoted suitors and matrimonial proposals. For Belinda is an heiress and very fascinating. Perhaps her triumphs have made her, at twenty-four, a little too confident of her charms, but she is an adorable, intensely romantic Belinda, and she is waiting for "the right man."

We see her first on the board walk at Atlantic City, rejecting the slow-witted, unimaginative Vaughan Outerbridge, with his family traditions, because he is too safe, and she wants a man she can "worry over, and fuss about, and be jealous of, and worship and adore, and tease and bully and be frightened of—and that's final."

Then comes a glimpse of her out motoring with Ralph Kingsland, a clean-cut, earnest, romantic boy of twenty, who throws his heart at her feet. As he says, she is far too good for him, for he has "lived a man's life, and all that." Belinda is amused, but her "no" is kind and sisterly.

BELINDA: I'm not saying you don't believe you're sincere; I'm sure you do. But when you've seen more of life, felt more, done more, perhaps then it wouldn't be I that you'd count the world well lost for. So hadn't we better wait?

RALPH (cagerly): Will you wait?

BELINDA: I can't promise. All I can say

is that I'm as fond of you as I am of any one. Little boy, little boy, don't let me make you cross! You see, I've such good reason for deciding as I have. I've flirted a lot in my time—I've been engaged—I've been kissed—I've been in a man's arms—I've had little thrills and flutters—I've done all the things girls do that we pretend they don't. But I know I've never felt the big thing, the real thing that makes you suffer and laugh, and cry and be glad, and wonder, and be frightened that you are so happy—that glorious thing that perhaps may come to me some day, and if it should, and I were married to some one else, how hideous it would be for all of us! For I should be game enough to die game. I'd rather risk the chance of never having it than to have it and then lose it. Do you see?

RALPH (slowly): I think so—a little. I suppose it must be wonderful!

BELINDA: I know it must. Let's hope we both find it some day.

RALPH: You've been bully. You don't mind my asking you again?

BELINDA: As often as you like.

RALPH: You sort of worried me, taking it so seriously. I don't know—I'm not deep like that—

BELINDA: I wish I took it lightly.

RALPH: And I always thought you were sort of fickle!

BELINDA: As a fiancée, yes; but not as a friend.

Again, on the sands at Palm Beach, Belinda sits talking with a rather handsome, cynical, amusing man in his early forties. Nigel Gordon's proposal is not an impassioned one, but almost cold-blooded. He is, however, one of

Courtesy of Roi Cooper Megrue and of The Selwyns, Producers.



On the board walk at Atlantic City, *Belinda* receives a proposal of marriage from *Vaughan Outerbridge*.

the few men who have never bored Belinda, who amuses her, and whom she believes to be kind—although at times she is conscious of something sinister about him, which makes her afraid. She finally consents to his unique proposal of a trial engagement.

NIGEL: Just quietly—secretly, if you wish—be my fiancée for six months. It'll make me feel I've a bit of a chance. It'll mean I've really the right to be with you. You can test me out at breakfast, lunch, dinner, supper—in gay mood, in grave. You can see how I behave under all sorts of conditions—when I'm sick, when I'm well. Try me out for six months, rain or shine.

BELINDA: It's a queer idea. I don't see that it can do you any good.

NIGEL: Nor you any harm.

BELINDA: No-o. All right. Six months from now. We'll be up in the country then. Come for the week-end, and I'll say "yes" or "no" definitely.

NIGEL (*leaning toward her*): You darling! Aren't we to—how do they say it?—plight our troth with—

BELINDA (*drawing back*): No, we're not. This is to be purely a mental engagement, under the proper auspices of old Mr. Plato himself—with no plightings at all. You agree? Otherwise—

NIGEL: Since you impose the condition.

BELINDA: Very well, then. We're engaged, but nobody is to know.

NIGEL: As you wish, my darling. (He bends and kisses her hand.)

BELINDA: So that's settled. Now let's go for a swim. Give me your hand, fiancé. It looks like a heavy undertow, doesn't it?

Some months later, at the Carter place in Westchester, Belinda and her father are entertaining a house party. Young Ralph Kingsland, Nigel Gordon, and Vaughan Outerbridge are there, as well as Lucile Berkeley, a dashing, impecunious widow, and Georgy Haile, one of those gay, but really pathetic, girls who spend their summers in social sponging. But the real lion of the occasion is a new man whom Belinda has recently met—John Leighton, a writer of popular plays. He had piqued her interest in a manner that is refreshingly new to her. Seated with him in the conservatory, Belinda suddenly orders the lights turned on.

JOHN: Why did you do that?

BELINDA: Oh, I don't know.

JOHN: I see. You must have been expecting me to propose.

BELINDA: Why do you say that?

JOHN: Oh, moonlight and madness and flowers—it's a conventional setting for the great avowal, isn't it? And you must be so used to that sort of thing.

BELINDA: I am. And I'm tired of being proposed to just because it's the time and the place and I happen to be the girl. I'm so keen to meet some man—some sensible man—who won't make love to me.

JOHN: Are you really?

BELINDA (heartily): Indeed I am!

JOHN: Then don't worry. (Bowing profoundly) You've met him.

LUCILE (leading the others in): Ah, here you are, Belinda, tucked away as usual with a new and fascinating man!

BELINDA: New, yes; but I haven't known him long enough to be sure of the fascination.

And then the talk turns to travels—and to Havana, from whence Lucile has just returned.

LUCILE: I wouldn't have missed it. The trip was marvelous! And when you sail into that wonderful harbor—

JOHN: Yes, isn't it wonderful? The quaint, narrow streets of a civilization long since past, the queer foreign types, the old-

fashioned, uncomfortable hotels; the noise—the eternal noise—the excitement of *jai lai*, the races, the roulette; the hum and fascination of the tropics—it is indeed another world right at our door.

LUCILE: You've described it perfectly.

VAUGHAN: Well, you may have your tropics. Give me the cool spots.

CARTER: Right. I'd like to take a peek at Chamonix again before I die. I can see that little river now rushing through the town.

JOHN: Isn't it inspiring? And to wake up in the morning to find Mont Blanc towering over you through the window! Did you ever climb Mont Blanc, Mr. Carter?

CARTER: Through a telescope. From the hotel veranda I watched a bunch of men going up the crevices.

JOHN: Those little black dots against the snow—even that is thrilling. And yet when you've reached the top, it is only the sense of achievement that rewards you. Almost always on the summit it's snowing and you can't see anything.

GEORGY (turning the conversation): Tell us about your new play, Mr. Leighton.

JOHN: But I haven't any new play.

LUCILE: I thought a playwright always had a new play.

JOHN: I fear there are many popular misconceptions about playwrights.

RALPH: You know, I think I'll write a play. It doesn't sound hard.

JOHN: No, it doesn't. Why don't you?

RALPH: All you need is just an idea and some dialogue—people talking just as we are—and a good cast.

JOHN: That's about all.

Alone with Belinda again, John confesses that he is really shy, and that it has taken years to acquire the protective coloration gained by hiding himself behind small talk.

BELINDA: I'm beginning to know you. You're a bit of a liar?

JOHN: Of course. Lies are only a form of imagination, and even a poor playwright has to have some imagination.

BELINDA: I like, too.

JOHN: Naturally. You're a woman.

BELINDA: Will you answer me something truthfully? Have you ever been abroad?

JOHN: Never.

BELINDA: So you didn't climb Mont Blanc—twice?

JOHN: Not even once.

BELINDA: And Havana?

JOHN: Never saw it. What made you suspect me?

BELINDA: Your eyes—they gave you away. You've nice eyes.

JOHN: Not very dependable ones, evidently. But don't you understand? If I describe the place, then the other person can't describe it; and most people are so dead, hideously inarticulate and dull when they attempt descriptions, I like to prevent 'em. If you say it first, they can't say it at all. And you know you'll say it shorter than they would, and if you don't, well, nobody minds listening to himself, anyhow.

BELINDA: It's a splendid scheme. I think I've really done it myself lots of times, but only sort of haphazard. I've never worked it out scientifically as you have. We are congenial, aren't we?

JOHN: We seem to be—shall we say as one liar to another fibber?

BELINDA: And the income tax—did you really agree with father?

JOHN: Well, you see, agreement is an enemy to conversation. If you agree with a man, he can't keep on with his discussion. If you argue, he'll go on forever. But nothing stops a chap's exposition of his brilliant ideas so quickly as to assure him they are brilliant. He can't disagree with you on that, and he can't keep harping on what you've admitted. So I merely agreed with your father. I always agree.

BELINDA: It's a sound philosophy, and amusing. But, income tax or not, I want you to be nice to father. I want him to like the people I like. Of course, he doesn't know much about the theater and its people. He's more interested in bridge builders and steel men and iron and— Oh, my ring—please! (*The jewel with which she has been toying rolls to the floor.*)

JOHN (*picking it up*): What an unusual stone! The coloring, the rays—I never saw one like it before—but once.

BELINDA: I'm mad about star sapphires. Nigel Gordon got it for me. Oh, he didn't give it to me. It's a present from father; but when I was trying to find just what I wanted—well, Nigel knows a lot about stones, and he discovered this for me at Cartier's, I think he said.

JOHN: Gordon! I see. Did you ever know Mrs. Horace Kent?

BELINDA: No. But tell me about yourself and your plays. Is it fun to write them?

JOHN (*after considerable interesting talk upon his hobby*): I hope I haven't bored you with my educational chatter on the theater.

BELINDA: Not in the least. You know you said agreement was an enemy to conversation. To tell you the truth, that's the

only reason I've been arguing—to bring you out. And now that I've heard you, I agree with you perfectly. And I like you awfully.

JOHN: Thanks.

BELINDA (*suddenly*): Are you married?

JOHN: Good heavens, no!

BELINDA: You don't believe in marriage?

JOHN: I won't say that. But marriage, to me, resembles prohibition: it's all right for the other fellow, but not for me. I have too much sense of self-preservation to think I could succeed where so many others have failed.

BELINDA: Then you haven't seen many happy husbands?

JOHN: No. Have you?

BELINDA: Yes.

JOHN: Well, we won't argue; you know my creed. But, anyhow, I don't intend to add to the number of the unhappy ones.

BELINDA: Never?

JOHN: Never!

BELINDA: It is such a comfort to meet a man like you.

JOHN (*suspicious*): Is it?

BELINDA: To find one that's congenial and entertaining, to feel that you can say anything you like to him, without chains, and never skid; to know that all of a sudden he isn't going to misunderstand and slop over, and try to hold your hand or want to propose, when all that's been in your mind is to have a pleasant paltry talk. Oh, it is wonderful!

JOHN: Great! We're going to get along famously.

Whereupon a trip to town with a dinner and theater party of two is planned for the following evening. John suggests that some time Belinda must come to dine with him at his bungalow upon the top of a skyscraper, with its marvelous view of the city, the lights, and his unusual garden.

BELINDA: It sounds fascinating. May I really come?

JOHN: You must. Oh, your father won't object.

BELINDA: Why should he?

JOHN: I believe it's not quite the conventional thing in your world for a young woman to dine alone with a man in his rooms.

BELINDA: Yes, I've gathered that from the plays I've seen. Some one always breaks in—

JOHN: Not at my place. But, really, I



BELINDA: I'm so keen to meet some man—some sensible man—who won't make love to me.



shouldn't want to fall from your father's good graces, if I ever succeed in getting in them.

BELINDA: Oh, he won't mind! He trusts me—I trust myself—and you!

JOHN: Bully! Shall we say a week from to-night, at seven?

That nice boy, Ralph Kingsland, still imagines himself in love with Belinda, though he cannot understand her. At his first opportunity he seeks advice from John, who, as "a man of the world and a playwright, must know a lot about women."

RALPH: There's a girl, and I keep on proposing to her and it doesn't do any good. She just keeps on saying "no." She admits she's fond of me. Says I'm a "nice boy." That drives me crazy, and when I threaten to go to the devil or run away, she smiles

and says I couldn't do that—it would make her unhappy. And if my running away would make her unhappy, why the deuce doesn't she keep me here by marrying me? I don't understand her.

JOHN: Possibly she doesn't understand herself. Few of us do. She feels very sure of you, of course? And she knows you're jealous?

RALPH: You bet she does!

JOHN: That's a sensation all women love to create. It's one of their unpleasant traits. You see, young man, you're letting your heart run away with your head. You wouldn't do that if you were painting a picture or building a tunnel or performing an operation. You'd think. It's only with love we don't think. We just plunge blindly ahead. In a profession, in a business, we men try to learn the rules; we study; but no one studies courtship. No one bothers about learning to love or mastering some of the rules of the marriage game. And it's quite a game. We blunder on, hoping for the best and fearing the worst, and usually our fears come true. This young woman of yours—she's attractive?

RALPH: Wonderful!

JOHN: And popular?

RALPH: Every one is simply nutty over her. She's used to too much attention.

JOHN: Well, you ought to do the opposite of what she expects; pique her curiosity, arouse her interest, practice the unusual, avoid the obvious, don't do what everybody else does, and you'll stand out head and shoulders above 'em. Use your head, and give your heart a vacation.

It is little Georgy Haile, however, who



BELINDA: It is such a comfort to meet a man like you!

JOHN (suspicious): Is it?



BELINDA: Do you realize how loathsome your sense of calm superiority actually is?

gives Ralph the best advice upon the subject. She knows that he is, and always will be, quite out of the running with Belinda, and, having convinced him of this, she artfully manages to turn his attention to herself.

A little later, Nigel Gordon, sauntering into the deserted room, discovers a beaded hand bag upon the sofa. He opens it and examines the contents. Glancing around cautiously, he takes from the bag a diamond bracelet and thrusts it calmly into his pocket; then he rings for the butler, to whom he hands over the bag to be delivered to its owner. Presently John Leighton enters.

JOHN: I don't believe you remember me, Mr. Gordon.

NIGEL: Don't believe I do.

JOHN: Last year at a house party at Pinchurst; I recall it quite well. My friend Mrs. Collamore lost rather a handsome necklace.

NIGEL: I don't remember the incident.

JOHN: And later that spring, at White Sulphur—

NIGEL: Did I see you there, too? I'm appallingly stupid remembering people.

JOHN: I was there, but we didn't happen to meet. At White Sulphur, during the Red Cross benefit, Mrs. Steven Denby missed quite a valuable watch.

NIGEL: Your friends are unfortunate.

JOHN (*unheeding*): Detectives were employed, servants discharged—but neither the thief nor the property was ever discovered.

NIGEL: I dare say that often happens, but really I fail to see what all this has to do with me!

JOHN: Nothing, of course—except that at Pinchurst and White Sulphur we were both present, and here we are again. Those things sometimes happen in threes, and I'm hoping there won't be any similar unfortunate coincidences here.

NIGEL: Let's hope not. If there were it might almost seem as if—

JOHN: As if one of us were a thief? I quite agree with you. (*Upon BELINDA's entrance the subject is quickly dropped.*)

A little later the secret, trial engagement between the cool Mr. Gordon and his charming hostess is definitely terminated. "I promised nothing but a



JOHN: In my world we don't care so much how things look; it's what people do. In your world appearances are everything.

six months' trial," says Belinda. "You've had it, and you haven't made good. It's 'no,' finally, definitely, irrevocably. I won't even discuss the matter. Good night."

By this time Lucile Berkeley's bag has been restored to her and she has discovered the loss of her valuable diamond bracelet. Before sending for a detective, John prevails upon Mr. Carter to let him handle the situation. The guests are apprised of the loss and the butler questioned and acquitted.

NIGEL: That puts me in an awkward position. You see, I happened to be the one who found the bag there on the couch. And then I rang for Parker. If you want to search me or my things—

BELINDA: Don't be absurd!

JOHN: I don't imagine searching any one will be necessary. I recall an episode that occurred at Pinchurst last winter—

NIGEL (*in his ear*): Don't! I'm engaged to Belinda.

JOHN (*after a slight pause*): After all sorts of suspicions had been proved false, the necklace—it was a necklace then—was found where it had slipped behind the cushions of a couch—rather like this one!

But a search behind the cushions of the couch fails to reveal the missing bracelet. Then Nigel strolls over, his hands in his pockets, to try *his* luck. He is successful. From a distant corner, hidden in the upholstery, he pulls out the diamond bracelet.

JOHN (*alone with BELINDA*): May I ask you something that I meant to earlier—and you won't think me impertinent? (*She nods.*) Are you engaged?

BELINDA (*gently*): Would you mind?

JOHN (*alarmed*): I? Not in the least. But you're far too nice a girl to make a mess of things. You're like the flower that just naturally turns toward the sun for affection. But sometimes the flower makes a mistake and it's not the sun, after all—merely an electric lamp.

BELINDA: And you want to insulate me from a short circuit?

JOHN: I'd like to, if I may.

BELINDA: But it's all merely impersonal—merely protective?

JOHN: Exactly! Your affections are no business of mine.

BELINDA: Of course I'm engaged.

JOHN: Oh! And after all you said before that you were so tired of being made love to—of—

BELINDA: But you can't believe all I say any more than, from your own admissions, I can believe all you say. (*NIGEL enters and stands listening.*)

JOHN: Now, I suppose, you won't come to my place a week from to-night.

BELINDA: But of course I will. I'm looking forward to it. It'll be quite an adventure.

And when the curtain rises

again, Belinda, in a bewitching pink gown, is just finishing dinner with John in his charming apartment overlooking the wonderful lights of Broadway.

BELINDA: Well—alone with an author, sipping champagne! If I were only smoking, too, I'd represent perfectly the popular conception of a dramatist and his leading lady in their hours of naughty ease.

JOHN: In my world we don't care so much how things look; it's what people do. In your world appearances are everything.

BELINDA: Yet if a woman is clever, no one really knows anything about her. If I were your leading lady—

JOHN: You are.

BELINDA: Is this a proposal?

JOHN: It is not! You are the leading lady of my affectionate friendship.



BELINDA: I wish you joy of your little joke.

JOHN: But, Belinda, you don't understand! It's all a hideous mistake—



JOHN: Information! Information, I want to get the number of the church across the street—no, I don't know its name—no, I don't know the address—it's on Forty-fifth Street, just a small church.

BELINDA: You're always so definitely impersonal. Do you realize that never once have you flattered me? The best you've done is to say, "We're congenial"—which merely means you think I'm like you. And I'm not so sure I consider that complimentary. I want to be made a fuss over.

JOHN: Don't you always say you *don't* wish to be made love to?

BELINDA: But I resent your not doing it, just the same.

JOHN: How like a woman!

BELINDA: That's what you men always say when you're floored for a really good answer.

JOHN (*smiling*): Then, having been crushed to earth, perhaps I'd better rise again—to show you my lights.

BELINDA: Do you realize how loathsome your sense of calm superiority is?

JOHN: Quite; but I can't help it.

BELINDA: If you knew how whole-heartedly I detest conceit!

JOHN: You don't think I'm conceited?

BELINDA: But I do—and vain and cowardly, and—and—oh, ye gods, *how* conceited!

JOHN: Why?

BELINDA: Because—because—

JOHN: The usual feminine reason.

BELINDA: Not in the least. I merely hesitated in order to give me time to catalogue your vices. You're a coward because you're afraid to marry. You're vain because you think you are self-sufficient; you feel you don't need a wife, and, of course, in your honest moments you know you do. You're conceited because you believe you are above and beyond all women—"silly little dears," merely useful to analyze and put on the stage because, more's the pity, you really can't do without 'em in your darned old plays.

JOHN: But I have an idea of a play without any women.

BELINDA: Yes, I know. You told me, and it's dull.

JOHN (*surprised*): Did I tell you?

BELINDA: No, but I don't want to hear it. Aren't you all the things I said?

JOHN: I may be a coward about marriage. My mother says so. You'd find her a sympathetic audience.

BELINDA: You mean your mother actually *wants* her son to marry?

JOHN: Most emphatically. She's at me all the time. She wants me to be a father.

BELINDA: Your future children's grandmother must be nice.

JOHN: She's the nicest, bulliest, best mother—you'd love her. No one that I like very much could fail to do that. But don't get me started. I'm pretty keen on mothers. Good mothers deserve happiness. God knows they earn it sacredly.

BELINDA: When you talk like that, I could fairly hug you.

JOHN: Don't, please—or I might have to violate my sacred principles and make love to you!

BELINDA: And you're afraid to? You are inhumanly superior.

JOHN: Superior! Good Lord, little girl, how can any one be *superior*? I don't see, really I don't. We're all, except to the one or two, such little trifles.

BELINDA: Just when I'm sure about you, you disarm me by some speech like that.

JOHN: But you aren't really cross, or you'd never have let me see so much of you this last week.

BELINDA: But I haven't been quite fair to Nigel.

JOHN: I haven't gone in for protecting your fiancé yet. He can do that for himself, if he can.

BELINDA: By all proper rules he ought to burst in at that door.

JOHN: Any minute.

BELINDA: I'll hide in your bedroom. I couldn't think of being so unfaithful to your plays as to hide anywhere but in your bedroom. By the way, what have you done with my star sapphire?

JOHN: I haven't sold it, nor even lost it. *(He crosses to a hidden wall safe.)*

BELINDA: What on earth did you want it for?

JOHN: That you shall know when you leave to-night.

BELINDA: It's quite a mystery.

JOHN: Quite. *(The butler enters with the announcement that Mr. Nigel Gordon is calling.)*

BELINDA *(with a squeal of delight)*: There! What does he want?

JOHN: Just a little matter of business.

BELINDA: But he mustn't see me.

JOHN: Why not? It's perfectly innocent.

BELINDA: But Nigel's not the sort to think so. Oh, dear!

JOHN: Then away with you into the bedroom.

BELINDA: I never believed this would happen.

JOHN: Sometimes life imitates the theater. An angry fiancé has been known to burst in. Maybe he *does* suspect you're here. Better hurry. *(She disappears just a moment before Nigel enters.)* Ah, Gordon, not altogether an unexpected visit! You've come to—

NIGEL: I've come to take Miss Carter home.

JOHN: Then you were listening that night Miss Carter and I made this engagement. I hoped so,

but I was afraid perhaps you hadn't. As it is, it's quite all right.

NIGEL: May I ask—

JOHN: Certainly. I hardly anticipated you'd be obliging enough to call on me, unless the bait in my little trap was as alluring as Miss Carter is. So I set the bait; you've bitten, and here you are in the trap.

NIGEL: I've no inclination to discuss—

JOHN: Of course you haven't. You didn't think you were to be in a trap at all; you thought I'd be. You expected to stir rather a nasty mess over Miss Carter's presence here; you fancied that for her sake I'd keep quiet about your jewel-studded past, just as I did that night you—*recovered* Mrs. Berkeley's bracelet. But forewarned— *(Rais-*



RALPH: And we'll sneak away—just quietly. 'If we did the church thing, I know I'd say "no" when I meant "yes."'

GEORGY: I can't risk that. We'll do it quietly.





HANNAH: Miss Belinda, I never knew you to be so heartless. I'm all upset myself, too. I've got a terrible headache!

ing his voice) Oh, Hannah! (From an inner room, the door of which has been ajar all evening, enters BELINDA's maid, a sweet-faced, elderly woman, who has been her childhood nurse. HANNAH's presence has been arranged as a part of JOHN's plan, BELINDA herself being unaware of a chaperon for her "adventure." HANNAH, having been identified, is dismissed.)

JOHN: I fancy there'll be no unpleasant chatter now about Miss Carter's visit. There'll be no trading of my silence for yours.

NIGEL: You're quite clever.

JOHN: Quite. One doesn't necessarily have to be a crook to imagine what a crook would do under certain circumstances.

NIGEL: And may I ask again—

JOHN: Certainly. My plan is this: You are merely to write Miss Carter a letter now, telling her that you stole Mrs. Berkeley's bracelet. You may make up any touching excuse you like—business troubles, temporary madness, what you please—but for her sake you insist upon breaking your engagement—heroic renunciation—that sort of thing if you wish, but you must make the facts plain.

NIGEL (coolly): I won't do it.

JOHN: Come, come, what's the use of bluffing? You stole those things at the Collamores', the Denbys'—

NIGEL: There's no proof.

JOHN (taking out BELINDA's star sapphire): Did you ever see this ring?

NIGEL: Never.

JOHN: You appropriated it from Mrs. Horace Kent; you subsequently sold it to Miss Carter—a fine, rotten trick! You said it came from Cartier's. They say it didn't; and their reputation is such that a jury would believe them. I've seen

Mrs. Kent; she identifies it as her ring; we know it came to Miss Carter through you—pretty clear chain of evidence.

NIGEL: Excellent! As you say, there's no use bluffing. About the other thing—well, I thought I'd covered my trail rather well. But the ring— Unfortunate I should bump into you. But if I should now throw this through the window, the evidence would be gone.

JOHN: But your confession wouldn't be.

NIGEL: I don't believe I've made a confession.

JOHN: But you have. And it won't be entirely my word against yours. (Whereupon JOHN summons his butler, who has been stationed in another room within carshot of the conversation.) Write that letter and

then clear out—out of Miss Carter's life, out of mine. I give you my word there'll be no publicity, no prosecution. I've visited Sing Sing, and I've no desire to send *any* one there.

NIGEL: Thanks, but I don't intend to go to Sing Sing, and I don't intend to write the letter. You're leaving Miss Carter out of this. You see, she loves me—she'd forgive me.

JOHN: She'll have no chance to; and she shan't marry you. I've decided that.

NIGEL: Really? Miss Carter's affairs are no concern of yours.

JOHN: But I'm making them my concern. You can have half an hour in the next room to think it over. If I don't have that letter then, you'll go in your best dramatic manner.

NIGEL: And break Belinda's heart!

JOHN: I doubt if her heart is so fragile you could break it. (*Under guard of the butler, NIGEL is ushered into an adjoining room.*)

BELINDA (*reëntering*): Has he gone? (*JOHN nods.*) Business successful?

JOHN: Very.

BELINDA: Well, his coming here gave me a thrill quite in your best dramatic manner. I got excited waiting to be discovered. Now I'm disappointed.

JOHN: The evening isn't over yet.

BELINDA: You know, waiting in there I did quite a lot of thinking. Pleasant thoughts—about you and me. I've known you a week, haven't I? And meanwhile you and I have had seven lunches, seven theaters, seven suppers, and six dinners. Allowing sixteen hours for the respectable part of a day, we've been together for about ten hours every day for seven days.

JOHN: I suppose we have.

BELINDA: I believe you've compromised me. Lots of my friends—yours, too, I suppose—have seen us together, and you said in my world appearances count.

JOHN: But what are we to do about it?

BELINDA: I've been reflecting. Being together so much, we must have amused each other, or we could never have stood it. As you say, we *are* congenial.

JOHN: What's this leading up to?

BELINDA: Well—why don't you propose to me?

JOHN: I? But you're engaged!

BELINDA: Yes, but it's never too late to break. Of course, I shouldn't want to lose Nigel unless I were sure of some one else. I'm getting on—I'm twenty-two.

JOHN: Really? I should have given you twenty-four.

BELINDA: That's nice of you. I'm twenty-six.

JOHN: You're poking fun at me in all this. Just because I've said I won't marry, because I haven't poured out on you the usual flattering drivel, you've decided to humiliate me—add me to your conquests in spite of myself.

BELINDA: You've a wonderful sense of character analysis.

JOHN: I must admit that. Well, if I *did* ask you, what would you say?

BELINDA: What do you think I'd say?

JOHN: I think you'd say "no."

BELINDA: You *are* discerning.

JOHN: Good! Then, Belinda, will you marry me?

BELINDA: Yes.

JOHN: Yes? You don't mean it?

BELINDA: Oh, but I do! Yes, yes, yes! Of course, there aren't any witnesses, but you're a man of honor; you'll stick to your word. And, of course, if we *were* married, we wouldn't see half as much of each other as we have lately. (*JOHN is plunged into such ecstasy that he can think of nothing sufficiently ecstatic to say. A moment later Mr. RALPH KINGSLAND is announced, and BELINDA again dashes into the bedroom. In an excitement due to mingled amazement and joy, JOHN sees the telephone and thinks of his mother.*)

JOHN (*having got his connection*): By Jove! By Jove! Oh, hello! Is this you, mother? Well, I've met her. You're going to be a grandmother. Oh, a—well—I don't know. Just a perfect peach. You'll adore her as I do. She loves you already. We'll motor up to-morrow. Who is she? Oh, of course! Belinda Carter. Certainly you've heard of her. No, she isn't. She may seem so. Well—yes, because everybody's crazy about her. I tell you she's a darling! No, not in that way. (*RALPH enters.*) Vain and spoiled? Oh, mother, that's because she's popular! Of course, she's been pampered a lot; everybody proposes to her. Yes, only just now. She practically proposed to me. I made her. Yes, pretended I didn't care; used my head and not my heart. I always told you I would, when the right time came. And it worked—it worked beautifully. (*RALPH steps out.*) All this week I've been acting, making believe I was indifferent, when every second since I've met her I've done nothing but worship and idolize and adore her. Jove, it's been hard—but it's turned out so gorgeously! I know you are. We'll be up to-morrow. By-by.

Ralph has no sooner entered and offered his congratulations than John is called out for further discussion with

Nigel. Belinda, hearing the door close, ventures out. Ralph stands transfixed at sight of her. Then, recalling the telephone conversation he has overheard, he construes the situation. Belinda admits her engagement to John.

RALPH: I heard him talking to his mother there on the phone.

BELINDA: His mother! Oh, that's all right. But you won't tell any one, please?

RALPH: I should say not! Great heavens! You'll never marry him if I can stop it! To see you throw yourself away on a man like that! Why, when I realize how he feels toward you, it makes me crazy!

BELINDA: Ralph! You must be crazy! Why, I won't listen to you!

RALPH: Oh, yes, you will! He said right there on the phone that you were vain and spoiled—that you were pampered—that he made you propose. Oh, he said a lot! I thought it was funny kind of talk. I never dreamed it was about you!

BELINDA: But you misunderstood—

RALPH: I did not, because I recognized it all. He gave me just that sort of advice a week ago up in the country; said not to do the obvious—make the girl do the proposing; not to let your heart run away with you; avoid the girl and you'd stand out head and shoulders above everybody else—one of his damned silly theories!

BELINDA: You're quite sure about all this?

RALPH: Positive. But to think he was using it with you! What's his game, I wonder? It's your father's money, I suppose, or to try out a plot to see how it works on you. To think you threw me over for a man like that! Well, you'll never marry him—not while I'm alive! (*Exits in anger.*)

Though deeply hurt, Belinda smiles at John when he returns.

BELINDA: Don't you think our little joke has gone far enough?

JOHN: Joke? What are you talking about?

BELINDA: Oh, it's been amusing enough till now; but now, as honors are even, suppose we split the comedy, fifty-fifty, and let it go at that.

JOHN: I haven't the remotest idea—

BELINDA: You came to the conclusion that I'd fallen in love with you. So you determined to use your head and not your heart. You pretended not to care for me as much as you did, little as that was. You thought me pampered and spoiled—that if you were quite indifferent, I'd throw myself at you.

JOHN: Were you listening just now?

BELINDA: Then you *did* say those things?

JOHN: But not in that way. Don't you see—

BELINDA: I confess I don't. Your motives are a bit clouded to me. I dare say it was just to analyze me, to store me away for use in some play.

JOHN (*angrily*): That isn't true!

BELINDA: It's all been very pretty and clever and funny. (*Almost in tears*) I'm laughing because with it all you've been so gorgeously stupid, as all theorists are. Just to teach you a lesson, I made you propose. And I accepted you only because I meant to break our engagement, as I am doing now.

JOHN: But you can't! I love you! I love you!

BELINDA: That romantic avowal comes a trifle late. And whether you do or you don't, be assured of this: I don't love you. I never had the slightest intention of marrying you, because I love Nigel Gordon and I intend to marry him. (*NIGEL, entering, overhears this.*)

JOHN: But you can't marry him! You shan't!

NIGEL: I believe that is a matter that concerns us.

As the distracted playwright paces the floor he hears Belinda agreeing to accompany Nigel Gordon to the little church directly across the street and to marry him at once. In vain does John protest. Belinda, choking back her tears, is hurried off by Nigel, who locks the doors upon John and takes the keys with him. In desperation, and with no success, John tries to get out, to telephone the church—the number and name of which he does not know—to get Belinda's telephone number. Hannah, emerging from her hiding place, reassures him with her belief that Miss Belinda will never really marry Mr. Gordon. But John's butler, who has been making a futile attempt to get a locksmith on a Jewish holiday, presently pushes under the door a note, which has apparently come from the rector of the church across the street. In the name of Miss Carter, the note requests that Mr. Leighton will refrain from making public the fact of Miss Carter's marriage to Mr. Nigel Gordon, which the rector has just solemnized.



*Belinda's telephone conversation with John's mother is interrupted.*

Next morning, Belinda, back at the Carter country place, is one moment utterly wretched and the next deliriously happy. One of these latter moments comes to her after a telephone talk with John's mother, upon whom she has already made a morning call. But preoccupied as she is, Belinda manages to have a talk with Ralph and then

with Georgy, whose budding love affair she arranges most happily. Having seen them in each other's arms, she turns sadly to her father.

CARTER: What about the playwright fellow?

BELINDA: It's just the same—no news. Oh, I wish I hadn't broken my engagement! But he did try to turn the tables on me, didn't he?

CARTER: From what you've told me, I should say he'd tried and succeeded.

BELINDA: And I couldn't permit that! You know, don't you, that in any really happy marriage the woman must be cleverer than the man? She must run things; of course, it's better if she doesn't let him know it. You realize that, don't you?

CARTER: Poppycock!

BELINDA: Don't you see I couldn't let John—Mr. Leighton—pull the wool over me? He deliberately planned to outwit me, and if he'd succeeded, all the rest of his life he'd be so vain and complacent there'd be no putting up with him. Oh, why did he try to be clever! If he'd just let himself go! I adored him the minute I met him. He didn't need to use so much brain—just a little heart. If he'd only said, "I love you"—and *grabbed* me! Why, even last night, after everything was so mixed up, if he'd just knocked me down or something, it would have been all right.

CARTER: That's your idea, is it? The cave man! Well, can't we do something?

BELINDA: How can we *note*? And anyhow, maybe he doesn't love me, really. Perhaps I *was* just an intellectual experiment. No, I think he does; you see, I talked to—

CARTER: In spite of what you did, do you still love Leighton?

BELINDA: How silly! After the way he behaved, most certainly I don't!

CARTER: Then what are you fussing about?

BELINDA: Don't ask stupid questions. Of course I love him. I love him because he *was* cleverer than I, because he *did* pique me, because his little scheme *did* work—and I hate him because it did. And he shan't be cleverer than I. Can't you think of something? You would if this were a business deal.

CARTER: Lord! A business deal would have some sense to it! Belinda, dear, are you really unhappy, or is it only that your pride is hurt?

BELINDA (*creeping into his arms, with a sob*): Father, I'm utterly wretched.

But Belinda's spirits rise perceptibly when Parker enters to announce Mr. Leighton, who is calling to see Mr. Carter. Meantime Hannah has returned. She explains to Belinda her unsuspected presence as chaperon at John's apartment last night, the locking of the two doors by Mr. Gordon, the impossibility of getting a locksmith until many hours had elapsed, and how Mr. Leigh-

ton "took on something terrible" after he got the note, "blaming himself for a silly fool, trying to be so clever or something—oh, he was just knocked out!"

With this preparation, Belinda is quite ready for John, whom she intercepts casually as he is departing after his interview with her father.

BELINDA: Father thought it best to show me your wire this morning. It is distressing, isn't it, that Nigel should do those dreadful things?

JOHN: I'm sorry, but I felt in fairness to you I ought to inform your father of the facts. It was not an easy nor a pleasant job.

BELINDA: Doing one's duty seldom is. It was kind of you, of course—especially now that it's too late to do anything about it. The marriage can't be annulled, because, you see, he's never been convicted. And, after all, you've no actual proof against him except Mrs. Horace Kent's ring, and if I don't testify, well, that falls to the ground—and of course I could hardly be expected to testify against my husband—so there we are!

JOHN: You could get a divorce.

BELINDA: But I don't want to get a divorce just the day after I'm married. And it isn't as if he were really a thief. It's just kleptomania. Nigel has promised to try everything in the world to cure himself—the best specialists say it is curable—and we must all do whatever we can to help him.

HANNAH (*entering, and speaking in accordance with BELINDA's earlier instructions*): Mr. Nigel Gordon is here.

BELINDA: Oh! (*To JOHN*): You'll forgive my running away? I do want to thank you for all the amusing times you've given me. Good-by.

JOHN (*intercepting her*): No, my God, you shan't go to him!

BELINDA: Mr. Leighton!

JOHN (*taking her by both arms*): You shan't go to him—that rotter! I don't care if he is your husband. I love you! I love you! I've loved you from that first instant those eight days ago. I've been wretched every second I was away from you. I've only lived to get back to you. I've wanted to take you in my arms, as I'm taking you now, and I've been afraid, afraid! I tried to be clever, yes—but it was only because I loved you so much I was afraid if I were like all the others I'd lose you. And I couldn't lose you! I won't lose you! I've dreamed of the moment when I'd tell you

of how I worshiped and idolized and adored you; of how I'd prove to you that nothing else mattered in the whole world but you—you, just you—my beloved! I've waited and prayed and *cried* for the moment that I'd hold you close—like this!

BELINDA (*her eyes closed with kisses*): Oh, why didn't you say all that—why didn't you do all that days ago?

JOHN: Yes, why didn't I? Why did I wait till now when it's too late?

BELINDA: But it's *not* too late. I'm not married.

JOHN: What! But that letter?

BELINDA: Oh, I went to the church across the street and bribed the sexton for a sheet of their note paper, and I went back to the Biltmore and dictated it to you. As soon as we got downstairs from your place I chased Nigel away. Since you were so clever, so studied in your campaign, I thought I'd prove I could be clever too.

JOHN: I've been a fool! (*He takes BELINDA in his arms. MRS. CARTER enters.*)

BELINDA (*happily*): It's all settled. Now you two talk together. I've a telephone to do—and don't listen.

CARTER (*strolling to the other end of the room with JOHN*): Well, it worked!

JOHN: Beautifully!

CARTER: Don't you ever breathe that I

tipped you off upstairs that all that stuff of hers last night was buncombe.

JOHN: I should say I won't! And don't you ever let her know that she fooled me completely.

BELINDA (*in phone*): Hello, mother Leighton. This is Belinda. He's here. Yes—yes—I'm so happy!

CARTER: And if you ever mention that I told you that what she really wanted was the cave-man business—all heart and no head—

BELINDA: It all came out just as you said it would. I'm so grateful you advised me so beautifully. You're a darling!

JOHN: And for Heaven's sake don't ever let it slip that all the time just now when she was pretending to be married, I knew from you she wasn't.

BELINDA: And don't ever tell him that I saw you this morning and found out the way he really felt. Of course I won't. No—probably he doesn't realize how well you know how to manage him. It'll all be just a mother-and-daughter secret.

CARTER: Well, you bet we men have got to stick together, or there's no telling what the women would do to us! And seriously, son—you know I haven't got a son—I'm mighty happy over this.

JOHN: I'm so happy, so proud, and so—so—so, damn it, I can't talk about it!

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## THE CHANGELING

WOMAN, bring rosemary and rue," he said,

"For this, our love, is dead;

Let violets form his fragrant bed,

And roses wreath his head.

Draw close the blinds; our house of life

Is desolate and drear.

I sorrow, but you do not mourn

Nor shed a single tear."

"I sorrow not; I weep not;

I lower not my head.

It is not Love who lies so still

Upon that narrow bed!

Love does not die;

It is a deathless flame!

Love does not change,

But ever is the same!

When rosy Love lies pale and wan,

And ecstasy is spent and gone—

It was not Love, oh, cruel shame!

But a changeling ans'ring to Love's name!"

MARIEL BRADY.





# O Tempora! O Mores!

*By Mariel Brady*



THREE hundred years ago, on Saturday night,  
Her corn-cob doll was put away at candlelight,  
And she was tubbed, and scrubbed, and simply fed,  
Then tucked into her little trundle-bed,  
To rise at dawn and to the church be led  
Where Elder Brewster raised his voice in prayer.  
The air was blue—her nose was, too—as on  
And on he thundered there.  
She learned that little girls with curls,  
And eyes, in any wise, not shy and pure and good,  
Could never go to heaven; and I'm afraid  
To tell you where he said a maid  
Would go who dared to wear a posy on her hood!

Three hundred years ago, on Saturday night,  
Her corn-cob doll was put away at candlelight.  
Now she is manicured, rouged, and richly fed,  
Then helped into her sable coat and led  
To costly movie palace where our Charlie says  
And does the funniest things you ever heard!  
Or else a vamp, eyelashes damp, bewitches  
Foolish men to deeds absurd.  
She learns that little girls with curls,  
And eyes, well, not too shy and pure and good,  
Can earn more than a president! And I'm afraid  
To tell you what this very modern maid  
Spends for her costly motor hood!

Three hundred years ago, on Saturday night,  
Her corn-cob doll was put away at candlelight.  
But that is such a long, long time ago;  
And girls will change—men like them better so!





# Semi-Precious

By Angie Ousley Rosser

Author of "Milady Coward," "Jimmie Convers," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

The story of a modern Enoch Arden.

HAD his wife been endowed with an atom of humor, Will Merideth might have been able to extract a grim sort of enjoyment from the situation. But Marcia, pretty, tearful, and gracefully prostrated, refused him the exercise of his own lively comic sense. When he apologized humbly for not having remained dead, she did not think it funny; to her such an attitude seemed only proper. For, by merely turning up alive, was he not wrecking her comfort, her happiness, and her future? The occasion undoubtedly called for a serious scene.

"Enoch Arden just looked through the window and went away in silence, didn't he?" Merideth queried whimsically. "It seems I've missed my cue all round. But I couldn't look through the windows, Marcia, you've got 'em so muffled up with lace and velvet. And I wouldn't have seen what Enoch saw if I had taken a peep. It's unfortunate that Phillip—I mean James—is out of town; I don't see what we can do until he gets back."

"And that will take days," she wailed, "even if we catch him at Los Angeles. Everybody in the world will know about it. People will laugh and sneer, and it will be a nine days' wonder. Will, I can't stand it. Publicity will simply kill me. Don't you see that they'll call me—they'll call me a biga-

mist? Will, you've just got to do something!"

"The only completely effective thing to do," he said soberly, "would be fall dead at your feet. But I'm remarkably healthy since they let me out of the hospital, and somehow averse to the idea of suicide. But short of that, my dear, I'm willing to do anything reasonable you may suggest."

"The government," she flared waspishly, "ought to do something about it. They sent me notice of your death two years ago. I—you—why, there's a memorial tablet for you in the chapel!"

When his irrepressible grin seemed to make light of this tribute, she was furious.

"Oh! You always make fun of everything!" This was harking back to ancient quarrels.

"I know I should have more respect for the dead," he admitted inanely, knowing that it was useless to hope for anything but a selfish intensity from Marcia. She would not lose sight of the main issue for even one friendly little bout of laughter shared.

"I suppose the simplest thing is divorce," he suggested. "Have you any idea how easily it might be arranged, or how quickly? I'm due to step out of the picture as inconspicuously as possible, I know. There won't be such a lot of publicity."

"Divorce!" Marcia shuddered. "That's the very thing we can't have. Don't you see how the whole thing would come out? I'd be branded. People would never forget that for six months I'd lived with James Arnold in—in—oh, I can't say it! Will, I simply cannot face a divorce like that."

"Then what?" He did not know what she had in her mind, but a shrewd darting of her eyes told that she knew exactly what she wanted him to do.

"Will, dear——" Her hand was on his arm now, ingratiating. It was the first time she had touched him since he had exploded the bombshell of his flesh-and-blood existence in her startled presence the hour before. "I know it's dreadful of me, selfish. But I've got so much at stake. Did any one—that is, did you come straight out here, or did you stop in the village?"

From her eagerness he divined the thing she meant to propose, and decided swiftly that he would make it easy for her. After all, she was a woman, helpless, and a considerable darned fool!

"Didn't meet a soul. I took a car direct from the Baltimore Station. It was quicker. Of course I should have wired or written, but somehow I couldn't do that.

"I see what you're thinking, Marcia. Perhaps you're right. You'd like me to go away, wouldn't you? Since I couldn't stay decently dead, just drop out quietly again?"

Marcia sighed waveringly. She was not ashamed, he knew, but merely entirely aware of the effectiveness of that pose she took, a pose which brought out the exquisite frailty of her neck and the clear pallor of her cheek.

"All right," he declared, "I'll do it. It won't make you any less a bigamist, you know, but I suppose you don't mind that so long as nobody else finds out."

"Don't be crude," she said quickly.

Then, penitent, she added: "*I know* you really appreciate my attitude or you couldn't be so generous. It's simply an impossible situation. And if you are willing to go away—for a little while—until we could think, plan something——"

"It won't be for a little while," he told her. His own plans were taking shape now. "It will be for good. From now on I shall be as little trouble to you as if I were really under the poppies in France. It's the only way. No one need know I'm not dead, not even James. Fact, from now on, *I am* dead."

"You sound so—so final," she said, a little faintly. "So ultimate. I wish you'd be a little more human about it." But there was a gleam of triumph in her eyes.

He thought her use of the word "human" unfortunate. It occurred to him that what he was planning to do bordered on the superhuman, but there was no use being bitter. He realized suddenly that to him, personally, Marcia no longer mattered.

"If you'll telephone the Washington Terminal for a rent car," he suggested, "I will leave that way. Probably attract less attention.

"I want to stop in Washington long enough to see Doctor Marbury. Don't worry about her," he added parenthetically, seeing that Marcia bit her lip apprehensively. "She's one human to trust. I can count absolutely on her silence. And there are some things I must talk over with her. Finances, for one thing."

Marcia flushed and looked distressed. Then she cast her eyes most appealingly at Will Merideth.

"I—I hadn't thought of that," she said slowly. "If you're supposed to be dead, of course you can't draw on the estate. I know that everything is entailed, but the lawyers said, as long as I lived——"

He waited, rather amused at this.



"I suppose the simplest thing is divorce," he suggested. "Have you any idea how easily it might be arranged, or how quickly?"

Her brow cleared.

"You must let me know where you are to be, Will. I will send you checks—no, of course, money orders—No, I'll send you money; whatever you say." Sweet generosity was in her face. It was becoming there.

"Thanks." Merideth was brief. "But that would scarcely work, I think. I couldn't receive money—that way. Don't worry about me, Marcia. I can always take care of myself. And you may remember the little nest egg from my mother's estate? It's been held in trust by Doctor Marbury. That's why I want to see her. It was available before I went away, but I

let it stand. I'd meant to turn it over to you—on our next anniversary, perhaps—but I guess it can serve you more efficiently by keeping me dead in the same state of luxury in which I lived, eh?"

"Oh, Will!" All the mournful reproachfulness of a tenderly cōding dove was in Marcia's voice and her backward glance as she trailed out to the telephone, but he was no longer moved by her histrionics.

Driving into Washington over the Conduit Road, Merideth was almost oblivious of the panorama of familiar and well-loved scenes. He had the soldier's acquired ability of making rapid adjustments, but this, he reflected, was the readjustment of a whole life. It required some concentrated mental gymnastics! He looked forward to the reunion with Doctor Marbury, the friend, confidante, and mentor of his boyhood days, with a delight which was keener because of the blighting chill of the one from which he had just escaped.

He smiled a little at his unconscious use of the word "escape." It had been with tenderer thoughts that he had journeyed toward Marcia. For, after all, she was his wife. They had parted with tears three years before.

And not so much as by a fleeting touch of the hand or a lingering caress of glance had she welcomed him back from whatever incredible romance or dark adventure had held him a silent prisoner for the past two years. Accepting his first brief and colorless statement concerning a loss of memory from shell shock, she had bethought herself only of the details of the now—and never an eager question had she for the how, the when, or the whatever of his prolonged absence and recovery. It was an hour of revelation to Merideth.

He knew that she would have given a more creditable performance had she had proper warning. She would have had her way, as to-day, but she would have effected the scene in a manner which would have lingered more pleasantly in her memory and his, and served somehow to envelop her in an aura of nobility.

But, as it was, she had been forced into the open with an exhibition of stark, undraped selfishness. He was glad it had happened so, for now he could leave without regrets—for Marcia. The old life, that would be harder

to relinquish. It had been a pleasant existence and had called to him mightily after the wearing experiences of the past two years. Always he had loved "Farmlands," and his fondness for the easy-going life of the community, with its country-club houses and hunts and semi-serious agricultural hobbies, had been comment among his friends. The quaint old manor house had been in his family for generations. Yet, even in this, he found no poignant disappointment. Some restless, seeking spirit, bred in him by the war, perhaps, had been urging him of late toward a life of greater vigor and effort, of cold contest. Now he was younger for the mere thought of seeking it where he would.

Perhaps, and this was his final summing up of the whole matter, in making her preposterous demand upon him, Marcia had done him an ultimate kindness. He was free.

But in this philosophical view his friend, Hannah Marbury, did not concur. The good doctor, nearer to tears of joyful hysteria than she had been in all the numerous years of her serene and well-poised existence, manifested toward him all the gratifying emotional reactions which a mother would have manifested—or a certain kind of wife. But she was volubly incensed at Marcia's attitude and Merideth's complaisance.

"You make fun of everything!" She hurled at him the same accusation that had been on Marcia's lips, when he referred to himself as a musical-comedy Enoch Arden, and like a stout, determined, and badly ruffled hen, she made a determined assault upon his intentions.

But at length she gave it up, agreeing reluctantly to carry out his few brief commissions. Secretly, she could not help admiring that blithe spirit in him which was, she supposed, a part of his eager, questing youth—that divine foolhardiness which made him willing



to cast aside an honored name and place in society in exchange for nameless existence in untried fields, all for the whim of a selfish, thankless woman.

"Will, you're crazy!" she declared in exasperation. "Doesn't it break your heart to leave her in possession of 'Farmlands?' And think of the money she'll spend, queening it out there while you elect to live on this pittance!"

"She ought to be made to take her medicine. I never knew anybody so sensitive to 'what will people say.' Heaven knows they said enough when she married that little runt, James Arnold! It began to look as if she'd actually lost her precious social prestige. People didn't seem to think he fitted in out there—they were too soaked in the Merideth traditions. But I will say for her she's done what she set out to do—got him accepted at last. He made the Hunters last month. I guess you looked like doomsday to her, sure enough. My, how she worships public opinion!"

"Well, you know how they'd be about her ears, if this leaked out," he reminded her. "She's made too many enemies to ever survive a scandal. No, Hannah, this is the only way. She's a woman, and a fool, but I contracted some years ago to protect her."

"You're the fool," Doctor Marbury insisted bluntly, but her eyes were tender when she told him good-by.

Merideth did not buy Baltimore or Washington newspapers that night on the train nor at any time thereafter. He asked Hannah not to write, although he promised to send word of himself from time to time. His small bank account was to be transferred to the credit of Will Godet in a new York bank. This was the name he had adopted in France at a time when he had no other. It would serve as well as any. He had sealed up every avenue of communication with his past as effectively as he knew how. This was the best way he could think of to start life over again.

So he did not learn of the death of James Arnold, who was killed in the wreckage of three Pullman cars on the night that Merideth left Marcia at "Farmlands," serene in the possession of her untarnished reputation and recaptured peace of mind!

Merideth chose New York as a place to live for two reasons. He meant to write and he hoped the city was the proper place to bring his literary wares. Then, too, he had always heard that it was the best place in the world for a man to lose himself, and he accepted the well-worn bromide unthinkingly. He was practically certain that in his new mode of existence he would meet no old friends.

And the day he moved into his modest studio apartment just off Aberdeen Square, he encountered Gay upon the stairway.

"Will!" she gasped.

"My dear!" As happily startled as she, he reached for the parcels she was dropping, and they both sat down on the landing, laughing.

He was unprepared for the shock of pure happiness this meeting brought. For all the depth of affection he had felt and acknowledged for Gay Warren, he was amazed to feel his heart pounding furiously like an infatuated school-boy's.

"I thought you were in France," he said in a banal fashion.

"I've not been back a week," she explained happily. "I moved in—there, day before yesterday." She was pointing, he saw, to the studio opposite his own.

"Come on in," she invited. "We can't gossip out here all day." They went into the large, bare room where a few visible tools of her trade reminded him of the days in Paris, where he had first known her. "I'm not really unpacked yet," she remarked, "but I've





The day he moved in, he encountered Gay upon the stairway. "Will!" she gasped.

the makin's of tea, if you'll wait a little." Her voice floated back to him now from the little cavern of her kitchenette. "I'm dying to ask you a lot of questions, and I wonder how many I dare. I can't imagine what you're doing here."

"I've got the studio across from yours," he said to her, his mind, as he spoke, filled with the new problems which her presence here suggested. How much to tell her? How to define their new relationship? Gay was steel true, of this he was sure; there were comforting implications in the thought of renewing the old intimacy.

As she came back into the studio, buttoning herself in an apron of daffo-

dil yellow, an apron that he remembered, he knew suddenly that this meeting was of more significance than anything that had happened in the last few momentous days and hours. Her eyes, friendly and honest, offered him a haven of comradeship. He must be fair with her, if he could not be entirely frank.

When she came with the teacups on a little tray and the plate of those absurd confections made of wafers and marshmallows and cheese, a combination as well remembered as the daffodil apron, and when she drew up her chair so that the tray might rest upon their knees, he knew that she had forgiven him for a silence that, to

her, must have seemed unpardonable.

"You took me on trust, when we were in France," he reminded her.

She nodded. A nameless bit of the war's backwash, he had lived in the same pension with her after his discharge from the hospital. They had done their best with him there, and his health was restored, but not his memory. Finding that France called to him still, he remained in Paris and found lucrative but uninteresting work in one of the departments of government. Of himself he knew only what the hospital officials had told him—that he had been found wounded, demented, and divested of all identification marks, in the wake of a skirmish at the outskirts

of Belleau Wood. Why go back to a country that he could not remember? Why return home to faces that he did not recall? He was fairly content in Paris.

And after he came to know Gay Warren he was happy. She was remaining in Paris, after her discharge from her branch of the Red Cross, to study landscape painting a little and rest a great deal. In this Will Godet she recognized the type she best liked of all the known types of her countrymen, and her heart was touched by the unassailable loneliness of his plight. They became famous friends, and for them, through all of life thereafter, the thought of Paris would mean the thought of each other.

Theirs had been a rare and beautiful comradeship. When it flowered naturally into love they were both frightened. Gay was, perhaps, thinking of that time now. Uncertain of anything, he would not let her love him. The key to their happiness was his past, and he did not know whether or not he was free. So their friendship had continued, but with restraints.

Gay replied softly to Will's statement.

"Yes, I took you on trust then. And I want you to know this: When you went away without a word, I understood. I knew that somehow you had found yourself—and that there was no place in the old life for me. Was I right?"

"Just about that," he admitted gravely. "Don't think I went away heartlessly, girl. But I couldn't see the use of coming back to you and the pain of parting. I was in a maze, practically a delirium of reality. After they sent for me, those doctors, and I responded to their newly devised electrical treatment—it was a series of shocks and countershocks; I'll tell you about them some day—why, the past simply

engulfed me like a flood. I felt that I had to get home as quickly as possible."

"Yes, but——" Gay seemed puzzled by his presence here. What of those ties and obligations which had called him home? He was alone, obviously.

"I can't explain everything yet, Gay," he said slowly. "I'll have to ask you to take me on trust again. Back there, in Paris, I had to think for both of us because of the relationships that might exist in the background of my life. Well, they do exist, but not exactly in the way I fancied. All I can tell you is: I'm still Will Godet, and I'm not free to marry any woman and probably will never be. My dear, it is happiness unalloyed to find you here, like this, but if you say the word I'll turn right around and walk out of your life again. I want to be fair."

"Don't be foolish," said Gay stoutly. "Friendship's worth something, isn't it?" And their hands clasped warmly.

So the careless camaraderie of their Paris days was shifted to New York. They explored the city from Grant's Tomb to the Battery. Gay did not turn out many thumb-nail sketches during the weeks which followed, and Merideth laid aside all pretense of writing. For excuses they gave each other that it was spring in Sheridan Square, that there were yet as many as six foreign languages in which they had not eaten supper, and that there was time enough for serious work when it was no longer possible to enjoy an April shower atop a Fifth Avenue bus.

Their friendship grew and prospered and was again a rare and beautiful thing. And when again it flowered into love, they were frightened, but not so frightened as they had been before. For it seemed so inevitable, so natural.

Gay's unquestioning acceptance of his simple statement that he was not free gave Merideth some unhappy moments. In the course of their growing intimacy there were many times when

he wanted to tell her of his situation. Her faith in him was sweet, but he felt that this new comradeship demanded complete frankness. But, although he tried, he could not tell her. Somehow, viewing himself honestly, he felt he had cut a rather sorry figure in the affair with Marcia. He wasn't sure whether he had acted the fool or the hero, and he couldn't quite bring himself to recount to Gay the details of his treatment at the hands of Marcia. So, for the present, he allowed his past to remain shrouded in its mists. And Gay seemed not to mind.

It was a night when they had ridden in the rain from the Art Museum to Washington Square, sitting on the top of a bus, to the amazement of a sedate public, with neither umbrellas nor rain-coats. The rain was as warm and in-offensive as the delightful odor which rose from the fresh-washed asphalt, and they sat huddled together, talking of Childe Hassam's shivery moonlights and enjoying themselves ecstatically.

In the hall Gay said:

"I've got to get into dry things. You, too. But come across about nine o'clock. I'll give you some coffee and show you how my moon looks when it rises behind the old church tower."

Magic of the night and summer-scented rain was heavy between them when he came into the room. And it was in her eyes, and in his own. She had changed her street clothes for an unconventional garment of dull-blue crêpe. It was something she had made for herself, in a prankish mood, and it resembled, more than anything else, the peasant smocks of France. A wide, white collar was spread beneath the quaintly pointed chin, and there were baggy trousers with pockets into which she could thrust her hands. It was the only negligee she possessed, and in it she looked a trim, swaggering boy, but to-night her hair was curling over her shoulders and there were mist-damp

ringlets against her temples. Merideth clenched his teeth.

She kept to her schedule, and they drew the high-backed settle close to the window to watch Gay's well-known and justly celebrated moon. And her rounded shoulder was warm against his own; in her throat he could see a little, pulsing flutter. Just as he thought to rise abruptly and stifle the tumult of his thoughts, she leaned against him, relaxed, and sighed.

"It isn't any use," she said. "You can't fight forever. Why don't you give up, Will? I have."

"What do you mean?"

Her eyes looked bravely into his.

"I think you know," she told him. "I want you to love me."

Her hair was sweet, like orris, and her body, warm against him, was fragrant, too, of orris. Her lips were like her eyes, eager and inviting, with all their tenderness unveiled for him, and he held her very close.

But she was crying after he had kissed her, and he was penitent.

"My very dear! Have I frightened—or affronted you?"

She shook her head and presently, holding his hand against her cheek, she said shyly:

"I think it was happiness that made me cry. I'm very happy, Will."

"We are both a little mad," he muttered.

"No," she declared; "sane for the first time. Will, am I a forward piece?"

"Darling!"

"You told me you weren't free to marry any woman. Are you free to love one?"

"Yes," he said with bitterness. "At least I do not owe my love to any woman. That obligation is dissolved. But——"

"No buts!" she demanded. "And let me talk, while I dare. Then your ties—and I'm not asking what they are



Her eyes looked bravely into his. "I think you know," she told him. "I want you to love me."

—they are conventional, not moral ones—yes?"

He nodded.

"Well, me, I have no ties—conventional or otherwise. I'm beautifully alone in the world. And I want my happiness. Aren't we both modern

enough, Will, to do in all reverence the thing that's done often enough down here in the village in all flippancy?"

"I wonder if you mean——"

"Yes, I do." She rubbed her cheek wistfully against his rough coat sleeve.

"Some day I want you to move my

trunk across the hall into your apartment, and take the shingle that's on my door and nail it under the one that's on your door. That would be our marriage as truly as if we'd got a special license and stood up at St. Martin's."

"You'd do it," he marveled. "But I couldn't, I couldn't let you." Still, his lips were on hers as he said it, and Gay knew that she had won.

When he told her good night at her door, he gave her a ring.

"This shows that we are 'betokened,' Gay," he told her gravely. "It belonged to my mother, and I've always had it near me. No other woman has ever worn it."

She kissed him ardently and, after he had gone, she kissed the ring. It was a quaint thing, square-fashioned, set with a really odd, green stone. Although it was a little clumsy, she thought the stone's carving was very fine. A peridot, she decided, somewhat brighter of tone than any she had seen. Gay rather prided herself upon her knowledge of gems and stones.

And she would never forget the sincerity of his eyes when he had placed it on her finger. Happy, she went to bed.

Happy, she awoke. It was late, but she decided it would be exceedingly good fun to go across the hall and make Will's coffee for him. They had often breakfasted informally together.

His door was open, but he was not at home; gone, she supposed, for fruit or cereal from the corner. So she busied herself happily at his little table, set the coffee to percolate, and sliced bread for toast. The door opened then, and she looked up smiling, but a woman stood on the threshold.

"I beg your pardon," the woman said in a soft, artificially modulated voice. "I was told that this was the studio of Mr.—of Mr. Godet."

"It is," Gay responded frankly. "He

has just stepped out, I think. You will wait?"

The woman moved into the room, not uncertainly, but with an obvious distaste. Gay received the implication squarely.

"I am Miss Warren," she explained simply, "a friend of Mr. Godet. I live across the hall."

The woman seemed to sense in Gay an adversary worthy of the cleverest steel, and she changed her manner.

"And you are planning to breakfast together, aren't you?" she asked with disarming interest. "And he's out buying something else. How delightful! I'm going to stay, too, so let me help."

A little surprised and more than a little apprehensive, Gay was helpless in the face of the enthusiasm and pretty eagerness of this woman who was drawing off her gloves and had already removed her hat.

"So this is where he has been living all the while," she murmured happily. "The dear boy!"

Gay's sense of foreboding deepened.

"You know Mr. Godet well?" She had to ask the question.

The other's laughter rippled deliciously, intimately.

"Know him? My dear—I'm his wife!"

"But I didn't know——" Gay was a little paler than she had been the moment before, but she had gameness in her make-up.

"Of course not," Marcia explained sweetly. "You wouldn't. That's because Will's the noblest creature alive, and the most loyal. But, thank goodness, all the necessity for secrecy and the wretched pretense is over now! It's the strangest story!"

"I am so interested," Gay murmured, twisting the ring on her finger.

Marcia was given to swift plans of action and doubtless discerned the intrinsic honesty of the girl before her. It would be well to disarm her com-



pletely with truth judiciously employed. So she told Gay the story of Will's reported death, of her unfortunate marriage a year later, of his unforeseen return, and his noble, self-conceived plan to play Enoch Arden for her sake. She told of the death of James Arnold. There were many facts she did not tell, and Gay received the impression that Will's voluntary penance had been made for love of Marcia Merideth, and she was made to believe that when Will returned and found his wife here, and free, he would all but go mad from joy.

So she congratulated Marcia prettily and, promising to return later, left the wife in possession of the field. She closed her door softly and locked it, for she meant that no one should witness the depth of her grief.

But Will Merideth had not gone to a near-by fruit stand, as Gay had supposed. He had left the studio in response to a curt summons from his friend, Doctor Marbury.

"Don't waste time asking questions, but meet me here at the Lafayette and talk to me," she commanded. "I'm here to do you a favor."

When he met her he grumbled that she was a martinet and she retorted that he was an infant, they kissed each other, and went in to breakfast.

"Somebody has to be around to look after you," she said tartly. "Did you know Marcia is in town?"

"Lord, no!" He was amazed. "Where is she now?"

"Probably at your apartment," Doctor Marbury informed him grimly. "That's where she started."

"But what for?" He was amusingly apprehensive.

Then, for the first time, he learned of the death of James Arnold.

"Marcia hasn't been a bigamist for more than a month now," Hannah Marbury said scornfully. "I think she was extremely grateful to the Southern Pa-

cific for extricating her from her tangle."

"I wonder why she didn't let me know," he mused. "But of course—"

"She didn't know where you were," Doctor Marbury supplied. "She tried hard enough to find out from me, but you know me."

He grinned appreciatively.

"But little Marcia has been busy," the good doctor continued. "I've been watching her. I think she trailed you with a couple or six detectives. She's canny, you know, and I think she's figured that she needs you. She wants you for a figurehead at 'Farmlands.' Somehow, her pretty social schemes fall flat. Of course she knew that the whole scandal of her marriage with Arnold would come out if you came back, so she went to the lawyers, and they cooked up a divorce, grounds of desertion."

"The whole proceedings were kept quiet. She was clever about managing that, and she means eventually to convey the impression that the divorce was obtained prior to her wedding with Arnold. And Marcia can get by with it, if she half tries!"

"Glory, Hannah!" he exclaimed. "Divorce—do you mean to say I'm free?" His eyes were so brightly boyish and his manner so naïve that even unimaginative Hannah Marbury could see what had happened to him.

"You are," she said practically, "unless you let Marcia get her hands on you again. I surely don't want to see her make a fool of you again."

"But what does she want?" he marvelled.

"You," she replied tersely. "You're her needed social asset. Now that she's got her divorce, she really hasn't the right to keep on there at 'Farmlands.' But that's where she wants to be. It's in her blood."

"Gosh!" he raved. "I'll give her 'Farmlands.' I'll deed it to her to-day."



Tell her so, Hannah. I'll give her any little thing. But I won't marry her again. I've got plans!"

"Then don't go near Marcia," she warned. "She'll upset 'em."

"Get rid of her, Hannah!" he begged boyishly. "Hustle her out of town for me, do. I don't want to see her. But she can have anything in reason, the whole darned place down there, if she wants it. Gay and I won't want to live down there. New York's our oyster!"

"Get Marcia out of town on the noon train, Hannah, and then come back here and we'll let you be bridesmaid at our wedding. You'll love Gay!"

"You once told me I'd love Marcia," she reminded him wickedly, but she accepted his commission philosophically, and her stout figure had not left the room before he was putting through a telephone call for Gay.

Her voice seemed sweet, but utterly remote, when she answered the call. But she promised to meet him for breakfast, and when she came she looked, somehow, whitely severe. He was puzzled.

"I've got news," he announced, beaming.

"I know," she replied surprisingly. "That's why I came. To congratulate you, and to bring you this. I'm glad for you, Will."

He looked at her in alarm. Her staccato sentences were like strange jargon to him, and he wondered if she were ill. He couldn't imagine what she was congratulating him for. And what was "this?"

She was holding it across the table for him, and he reached for it stupidly—the ring with the odd, green stone.

"You see," she explained evenly, "I went to your room this morning—before breakfast. I happened to be there when she came. She is lovely, Will. And she told me all about everything. And she's there, waiting for you. I thought, when you telephoned, I'd like

to slip out and give you the ring again, just to relieve you of the shadow of a worry."

Here Merideth attempted an interruption, but Gay was possessed of a hectic eloquence, and she was striving to avoid bitterness, outwardly, at least.

"I loved the ring, Will. But I'm returning it to you because I haven't the right to it. It's only semi-precious, after all, just as the love I offered you was semi-precious. And, of course, now that you can have the real thing—I noticed her rings, Will; the stones are as genuine as she—why, our little drama of last night is over! It was only a curtain raiser, after all." Her voice was steady, but she could not meet his eyes.

"Darn you, Gay!" he complained. "Your information is as muddled as your metaphors. Now will you listen to me? Will you?"

After the coffee had grown cold, their hands again clasped across the table, and the ring with the odd, green stone went back on the slender finger where it belonged.

"And you don't know it all about stones, my girl, yet!" Merideth crowed. "Some day, when you've nothing else to do, you might drop in at Mr. Tiffany's store and see how many pecks of perfect diamonds he'd give you in exchange for this. Semi-precious!"

He chuckled as he nestled her little fist into his own. "That blamed thing is an emerald cameo, one of the few in existence, and declared by experts to be the finest of the few. My mother was fond of boasting that it was the pride of Isabella's jewel casket—but, of course, if you'd rather have a solitaire——"

Gay did not answer, but shyly kissed the stone. She did not love it any better than she had the night before, but she hated to think how nearly she had lost it!

# SHEILA OF BIG WRECK COVE

by James A. Cooper



Author of "Tobias of the Light," "Cap'n Jonah's Fortune," "Cap'n Abe, Storekeeper," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE A. ROWE

## WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED.

Captain Ira Ball, a retired sea captain, living at Big Wreck Cove, and his wife, Prudence, generally called "Aunt Prue," need some one to look after their little household in their declining years. They send an invitation to Ida May Bostwick, a niece they have never seen, who lives in Boston, to come and share their home with them. Tunis Latham, a young friend who is captain and owner of a schooner called the *Seamew*, undertakes to deliver the message on his next run to Boston, and agrees to bring the girl down. He finds her a painted shopgirl, who declares she will not "live out of sight of movie signs and electric lights," and flippantly and ungratefully refuses the offer. Discouraged and annoyed with her, Tunis drops into Sellers' restaurant, where he has previously noticed a very attractive young girl who is waiting on tables there. A man sitting next to him, at her table, begins to argue with her in an insulting fashion about his check. Tunis rises to her defense and the proprietor charges at him. The young sea captain promptly knocks down both the patron and the proprietor, while the cashier runs for the police. Before the police arrive, however, the girl's quick wit enables her to save herself and Tunis, by means of a side exit, and they wander to a bench on Boston Common to recover from the encounter. There Tunis learns just how badly the girl, Sheila Macklin, needs such a friend as he has shown himself to be. She had been in Boston for less than a year, working in a big store, when some pieces of sterling silver in her department disappeared. The theft was traced to Sheila, who had no way of proving her innocence, and no friends to come to her assistance. She was sentenced to the St. Andrews' Reformatory for two years. After her release she became a waitress.

Realizing that she has no ties in Boston, and that the future holds little for her, Tunis proposes that she assume the identity of Ida May Bostwick and accept the Balls' invitation to live with them. The girl is very reluctant at first, but Tunis finally wins her consent, and takes her down to Wreckers' Head on the *Seamew*. There, the Balls welcome her and accept her without question, and she, as Ida May Bostwick, is soon an established and popular member of the community of Big Wreck Cove.

## CHAPTER XIV.

IT was not that Sheila Macklin had no graver moments. There were nights when, in spite of her healthful weariness of body, arising from the work of the household, she lay awake for long hours of restless, anxious thought. And sometimes her pillow was wet with tears. Yet she was not of a lachrymose disposition. She could not invent imaginary troubles or build in her mind gibbets on which remorse and sorrow might hang in chains.

Indeed, how could she be sorrow-

ful? Why should she feel remorse? She had taken another girl's name and claim of parentage, and she filled a place which the other girl might have had. But the rightful owner of the name had scorned this refuge. The real Ida May Bostwick had no appreciation of what the Balls had to offer, and she had been unwilling even to open communication with her relatives down on the Cape.

Besides, Tunis Latham always cheered the girl who was playing an impostor's part with the declaration that

The story began in the October number of SMITH'S

she had done just right—that without her presence on Wreckers' Head Cap'n Ira and his wife would be in a very bad way, indeed.

She could see that this was so. Her coming to them had been as great a blessing in their lives as it had been in her own.

She fully realized that Cap'n Ira and his wife would not have admitted her to their home and to their hearts had she come in her own person and identity. This was not so much because of their strict morality as because of their strict Puritanism. For a puritan may not be moral always, but he must be just. And justice of that character is seldom tempered by mercy. What they might have forgiven the real Ida May they could scarcely be expected to forgive a stranger.

In spite of this situation, the Balls were being blessed by the presence of a girl in their household who had been tainted with a sentence to a reformatory. Even now, when she knew they loved her and could scarcely imagine what they would do without her, Sheila Macklin was quite convinced that a whisper about these hidden miseries would turn Cap'n Ball, and even Prudence, against her.

Therefore she was careful, putting a guard upon her tongue and almost keeping watch upon her secret thoughts. She never allowed herself to lapse into reverie in their presence for fear the old people might suspect that she had a past that would not endure open discussion.

And, deliberately and with forethought, the intelligent girl went about strengthening her position with the Balls and making her identity as Ida May Bostwick unassailable. She had a retentive memory. Nothing Aunt Prudence ever said in her hearing about Sarah Honey, her ways when she was young, or what the old woman knew or surmised about her dead niece's mar-

riage and her life thereafter, escaped the girl. She treasured it all.

When visitors were by—especially the neighboring women who likewise remembered Sarah Honey—the masquerader often spoke in a way to reduce to a minimum any suspicion that she was not the rightful Ida May. Even a visit from Annabell Coffin—"she who was a Cuttle"—went off without a remark being made which would yield a grain of doubt.

Mrs. Coffin had heard of Ida May while she visited "his folks" in Boston, in a most roundabout way. She did say to the girl, however:

"Let's see, Ida May, didn't they tell me that you worked for a spell in one of them great stores? I wish you could see 'em, Aunt Prue! The Marshall & Denham department store on Washington Street covers acres—*acres!* Was it there that you worked, Ida May?"

"No," replied Ida May calmly.

"What store did you work in?"

"Hoskin & Marl's," said the girl, still unruffled.

"To be sure. That's what Esther Coffin said she heard, I remember. But I never got to that store. Couldn't go to all of 'em. It tired me to death, just going around Marshall & Denham's."

This and similar incidents were building blocks in the structure which she was raising. Nor did she consider it a structure of deceit. The foundation only was of doubtful veracity. These people had accepted her as somebody she was not, it was true; but she gained nothing thereby that the real Ida May would not have had to win for herself.

With Tunis approving and encouraging her, how could the girl spend much time in doubt or any at all in despair? She felt that she was a much better girl—morally as well as physically—in this environment than she had been for many, many months. Instead of being conscience wrung in playing the part of impostor and living under an assumed

name and identity, she felt a sense of self-congratulation.

And when in the company of the captain of the *Seamew* she felt almost exalted. There was a pact between them that made their tie more than that of sister and brother. Yet, of love they never spoke—not during those first weeks on Wreckers' Head.

He never failed to talk with Sheila as he came up from the town when the schooner lay at her moorings in the cove or was docked ready to discharge or take aboard freight. Business remained good, but all was not plain sailing for the young shipmaster. He confided in the girl many of his perplexities. When he went away again, rain or shine, the girl did not fail to be up and about when he passed the Ball homestead. He knew that she did this purposely—that she was on the watch for him. Her reason for doing so was not so clear to the young man, but he appreciated her interest.

Was he overmodest? Perhaps. He might have gained courage regarding the girl's attitude toward him had he known that, on the nights he was at home, she sat in her darkened, upper room and watched the lamp he burned until it was extinguished. On the other hand, Tunis Latham's brotherly manner and cheerful kindness were a puzzle to Sheila. She knew that he had been kinder to her than any other man she had ever met. But what was the root of that kindness?

There were many pleasant thoughts in Sheila's heart just now; nor did she allow the secret of her past to leave its acid scars upon her soul. She was the life and joy of the old house on the Head; she was the center of amusement when she went into company at the church or elsewhere. She managed, too, to be that marvelous specimen of beautiful womankind who can attract other girls as well as men.

For one thing, the girl played no fa-  
8—Smi.

vorites. She treated them all alike. None of the young men of Big Wreck Cove could honestly crow because Ida May Bostwick had showed him any special favor.

And none of them suspected that Tunis Latham had the inside track with the girl from the city. At least, this was unsuspected by all before the occasion of the "harvest-home festival"—that important affair held yearly by the ladies' aid of the Big Wreck Cove church.

For the first time in more than a year, Cap'n Ira and Prudence ventured to town in the evening. Church socials, in the past, and while Cap'n Ira was so much at sea, had been Prudence Ball's chief relaxation. She was naturally of a social disposition, and the simple pleasure of being with and of a party of other matrons of the church was almost the height of Prudence's mundane desire.

When Cap'n Ira heard her express the wish to go to the harvest-home festival he took an extra pinch of snuff.

"I swan!" he said. "If we take that Queen of Sheby out at night, she'll near have a conniption. She'll think the world's come to an end. She ain't been out o' her stable at night since Hector was a pup—and Hector is a big dog now! How can you think of such a thing, Prudence?"

"Queenie won't mind, I guess," said his wife calmly. "I shouldn't be surprised if you was saying one word for her and a good many more'n one for yourself, Ira."

However, they went to the harvest-home festival. It was bound to be a very gay and enjoyable occasion, and Queenie did not stumble more than three times going down the hill into the port.

"That old critter would be the death of us, if she could do it without being the death of herself, too," fumed Cap'n Ira.



In spite of his assurances, Sheila Macklin approached the old brown house behind the door—a tall, angular

There were half a dozen young men almost fighting for the privilege of taking Queenie around to the sheds and blanketing her, the winner hopeful of a special smile and word from Sheila.

The decorated church was well filled when the trio from Wreckers' Head entered, and most delicious odors rose from the basement, where the tables were laid.

Sheila was immediately surrounded by her own little coterie of young people and was enjoying herself quietly when a newcomer, whose appearance created some little surprise at the door, approached the group of which the girl was the center.

"Why, here's Orion Latham!" exclaimed one girl. "I didn't know the *Seamew* was in."

"We just made it by the skin of our teeth," Orion said, making it a point to shake hands with Sheila. "How are you, Miss Bostwick? I never did see such a Jonah of an old tub as that dratted schooner! I thought she never would get back this trip."

"I cal'late you wouldn't think she was Jonahed if the *Seamew* was yours, 'Rion," snickered Andrew Roby.

"I wouldn't even take her as a gift," snarled Orion.

"Guess you won't get her that way—if any," chuckled Joshua Jones. "Tunis, he knows which side o' the bread his butter's on. He's doin' well. We cal'late—pa and me—to have all our freight come down from Boston on the *Seamew*."

Orion glowered at him.





cedars with much secret trepidation. They saw Aunt Lucretia watching from the side figure in a black dress.

"You'd better have a care, Josh," he growled. "That schooner is hoodooed, as sure as sure! She'll stub her nose some night on Lighthouse Point Reef, if she don't do worse. You can't scarcely steer her proper."

"Nonsense, 'Rion!" spoke up Zebedee Pauling. "I'd like to sail on her myself."

"Perhaps," Sheila interposed, rather flushed, and looking at Orion with unmistakable displeasure, "Orion will give up his berth to you, Zebedee. He seems so very sure that the schooner is unlucky. I came down from Boston in her, and I saw nothing about her save to admire."

"And if you found her all right, Miss Bostwick," struck in the gallant Joshua, "she's good enough for me. Of course,

I heard tell some thought the *Scamew* had a bad reputation—that she run under a fishing boat once and was haunted. But I cal'late that's all bosh."

"Yah!" growled Orion. "Have it your own way. But after the dratted schooner is sunk and you lose a mess of freight, Josh Jones, I guess you'll sing small."

"I've heard," said Andrew Roby gravely, "that it's mighty bad manners to bite the hand that feeds you. You never was overpolite, 'Rion Latham."

#### CHAPTER XV.

It was a small incident, of course; scarcely to be noted at all when it was over. Yet the impression left upon Sheila's mind was that Orion Latham was deliberately endeavoring to injure



his cousin's business with the *Seamew*. If he talked like this before the more or less superstitious Portygees, how long would Tunis manage to keep a crew to work the schooner?

Had she dared she would have taken Orion to task there and then for his unfaithfulness. The fellow was, as Cap'n Ira had once observed, one of those yapping curs always envious of the braver dog's bone.

To the girl's disgust, too, Orion Latham showed plainly that he considered that he, as an older acquaintance of the girl, could presume upon that fact. He clung to her throughout the evening like a mussel to duck grass. Of all the Big Wreck Cove youth, he was the only one that she could not put in his place.

She did not think it wise to snub him so openly that Orion would take offense. This course might do the captain of the *Seamew* harm. She foresaw trouble in the offing for Tunis, in any case, and she did not wish to do anything that would spur Orion to further and more successful attempts to harm his cousin's business.

There was another matter troubling Sheila's mind after Orion had come to the harvest-home festival. Mason Chapin likewise appeared at the church. But Tunis did not come. He knew, of course, of the festival, and he had known when he sailed last for Boston that the Balls and Ida May intended to go. It did seem as if Tunis might have come; if for only a little while, before going home.

These thoughts made Sheila rather inattentive to other proposals, and she found herself obliged to go down to supper with Orion, since he had outsat and outtalked all the other young men who had hovered about her. She was nice to Orion; the girl could scarcely be otherwise, even to those she disliked, unless some very important matter arose to disturb her, but she did not en-

joy the remainder of the evening, and she was glad when Cap'n Ira and Prudence were ready to go home. It was full time, the girl thought.

Even then Orion Latham assumed altogether too much authority. Sheila had been about to send little John-Ed around for Queenie and the carryall, but Orion put the boy aside with a self-assured grin.

"Nobody ain't going to put you in the carriage, Ida May, but me," he declared. "I'll get the old mare."

He seized his cap and went out. In a few minutes they had said good-by, and the old couple and the girl went out on the church steps. Sheila saw the carryall standing before the door. A figure stood at the old mare's head which she presumed to be Orion's.

"The chariot is ready, I call'te," said Cap'n Ira. "Come on, Prudence."

Sheila helped the old woman into the rear seat and then aided Cap'n Ira as well. She got in quickly in front, but as she was about to gather up the reins the man holding Queenie's head came around swiftly and stepped in beside her to the driver's place.

"I swan! That you, Tunis?" exclaimed Cap'n Ira.

"Looks like it," the captain of the *Seamew* said gravely. "All clear aft?"

"You can pay off, Tunis," returned the old man. "Tuck that robe around your knees, Prudence. This night air is as chill as a breath off the ice barrens."

Orion loafed into the lamplight by the steps before Queenie got into action. His scowl was unseen, but his voice was audible—as it was meant to be—to Sheila's ears.

"There he is—hoggin' everything, same as usual. How did I know he was hanging around outside here, waiting to drive her home? Just as though he owned her! Huh! He may be skipper aboard that dratted schooner, but

that gives him no right to boss me ashore. I won't stand it."

"Sit down to it, then, 'Rion," snickered one of the other young fellows. "I cal'late Tunis has got the inside course on all of us."

The girl said nothing to the captain of the *Seamew* at first. It was Prudence who asked him why he had not been in the church.

"I could not get over here until just now," Tunis replied quietly.

Sheila wondered if he really had been detained on the schooner. Perhaps he had refrained from coming to the festival for fear the good people of Big Wreck Cove would notice his attentions to her. He had never been publicly in her company since he had brought her down from Boston. Orion Latham's outburst there at the church door was the first cue people might have gained of anything more than a passing acquaintanceship between the captain of the *Seamew* and the girl who had come to live with the Balls.

These thoughts bore down the girl's spirits tremendously. The simple pleasure of the evening was quite erased from her memory. She remained speechless while old Queenie climbed the hill to the Head.

The desultory conversation between Cap'n Ira, Prudence, and the young shipmaster scarcely attracted the girl's attention. If Tunis looked at her curiously now and then, she did not see his glances. And she merely nodded her understanding of his statement when Tunis said, speaking directly to her:

"The *Seamew's* going to lie here over Sunday this time, Ida May."

"That'll be nice for you, Tunis," Aunt Prue put in. "You can go to church. You don't often have that privilege. Seafarin' is an awful godless life."

Queenie sprang ahead gallantly at the sound of a hearty sneeze from Cap'n Ira, just then, and they were

soon at home. Tunis jumped out and aided the old woman and then the captain to alight. Sheila got out on the other side of the carriage. She would have preferred to run on into the house, but she could not really do that. Queenie must be unharnessed and put in her stable and given a measure of oats to munch. Of course, Tunis would offer to do this, but she could not leave him to attend to it without a word.

"I'll help you with \*Queenie, Ida May," said the captain of the *Seamew*.

That settled it. She had to remain outside while Cap'n Ira and Prudence went into the house. Tunis led the old mare toward the barn. A lantern, burning very dimly, was in a box just outside the big door, and Sheila got this and held it while Tunis busied himself with the buckles.

"I didn't mean to interfere," the man said, suddenly breaking the silence between them. "But as I was coming this way, of course, I expected to ride along with you. So——"

"What do you mean, Captain Latham?" the girl asked wonderingly.

"Orion said you sent him out to get Queenie."

"Why, I——"

"Of course, you didn't know I was there. I had just reached the church. But 'Rion is so fresh——"

"He took it upon himself to go," said the girl calmly. "I did not send him. I guess you know how your cousin is."

"He is too fresh. I'd like to punch him," growled Tunis, to the girl's secret delight. It sounded boyish, but real. "I don't know that I can stand him aboard the *Seamew* much longer. He attends to everybody's business but his own."

"He means you no good, Captain Latham," she said frankly. "To-night he was repeating that silly story about the *Seamew* being haunted."

"Cat's-foot!" ejaculated Tunis. "I wish I'd fired old Horry Newbegin for starting *that*."

"But 'Rion keeps it up."

"If he believed she was hoodooed, you wouldn't get him aboard with a wire cable," growled Tunis.

"It would be better for you and for the success of your business, Captain Latham, if 'Rion was really afraid of going aboard the *Steamer*," she said with confidence.

"Well, I don't see how I can fire him. He's my cousin—in a way. And there is enough ill feeling in the family now. Gran'ther Peleg left all his money to me, and it made Orion and his folks as sore as can be."

"You are inclined to be too kind. I am not sure it is always wise to be too easy."

"Like chopping off the dog's tail an inch at a time, so's not to hurt him so much, eh?" he chuckled.

"Something like that."

"Well, I'm almost tempted to give 'Rion his walking ticket. I've reason enough. He can't even keep a manifest straight."

"Does he even try?"

"And that also is in my mind," acknowledged Tunis. "I'm pretty well fed up on 'Rion, I do allow. But I don't know what Aunt 'Cretia would say." Then he laughed again. "Just about what she usually says, I guess; nothing at all. But she abhors family squabbles."

"That reminds me, Ida May. This being the first Sunday I've been home since you came here, I want you should go over with me after church to-morrow and have dinner at our house."

"Oh, Captain Latham! I——"

"And don't you guess you could employ some other term when speaking to me, Ida May?" he interrupted. "I get 'captained' almost enough aboard the schooner and up to Boston. Just

plain 'Tunis' for those that are my friends suits me a sight better."

"I shall call you 'Tunis,' if you like," she said composedly. "But about taking dinner with you—I am not so sure."

"Why not?" he demanded.

"Your aunt has never called here since I have been on the Head."

"She don't call anywhere. She never did that I can remember. She goes to church on Sunday sometimes. Occasionally she has to go to town to buy things. Once in a dog's age she heaves anchor and gets as far as Paulmouth. But other times she's never off the place."

"I—I feel hesitant about doing what you ask, Captain—Tunis, I mean."

"Why?"

"You know well enough," said Sheila. "If anything should turn up—if the truth should come out——"

"Now, are you still worrying about that, Ida May?"

"Don't you think of it—Tunis?"

"Not a bit! We're as safe as a church. That girl will never show up here on Wreckers' Head. Of course not!"

He seemed absolutely confident. In the dim illumination of the lantern she looked very closely into his face. Then it was not fear of exposure that kept Tunis Latham silent. She moved closer to him, looking up into his countenance, holding the lantern so that her own face was in the shadow.

"Who suggested my coming to dinner, Tunis? You, or your Aunt Lucretia?"

"If you knew my aunt! Well! She seldom says a word. But when I have anything to say, I talk along just as though she answered back like an ordinary person would. I can tell if she's interested."

"Yes?"

"She's been interested in you from the start, I know. She showed it in her look the very first time I spoke of you

—that day I brought you here to Wreckers' Head."

"But—but you have never spoken of this before. She did not come to call."

"I'll tell you," said Tunis earnestly. "I wanted to be sure. Aunt 'Cretia knew your—er—Sarah Honey very well."

"Oh!"

"Just about as well as Mrs. Ball did. When she was staying here with Aunt Prue, she used to run over to our place a lot.

"You don't remember it," continued Tunis, grinning suddenly; "but you were taken over there when you were a baby."

"Oh, don't! Don't!" cried the girl. "Let us not speak so lightly—so carelessly. Suppose—suppose—"

"Suppose nothing!" exclaimed Tunis. "Don't have any fears. She wanted to know just how you looked—every particular. Oh, she has ways of showing what she wants without getting what you'd call voluble! I told her about your hair—your eyes—everything. I know from the way she looked that she accepts the fact of your being the real Ida May without more question than Cap'n Ira and Aunt Prue."

She was silent, thinking. Then she sighed.

"I will accept the invitation, Tunis. But I feel—I feel that all is not for the best. But what must be must be. So—oh, I'll go!"

#### CHAPTER XVI.

The benison of that most beautiful season of all the year, the autumn, lay upon Wreckers' Head and the adjacent coast on that Sunday morning. Alongshore there is never any sad phase of the fall. One reason is the lack of deciduous trees. The brushless hills and fields are merely turned to golden brown when the frosts touch them.

The sea—ever changing in aspect, yet

changeless in tide and restraint—was as bright and sparkling as at midsummer. Along the distant beaches the white ruffle of the surf seemed to have just been laundered. The green of the shallows and the blue of the deeper sea were equally vivid.

When she first arose Sheila Macklin looked abroad from that favorite north window of her bedroom, and saw that all the world was good. If she had felt secret misgivings and the tremor of a nervous apprehension, these feelings were sloughed away by this promising morning. The fear she had expressed to Tunis Latham the evening before did not obsess her. She continued placid and outwardly cheerful. Whatever threatened in the immediate future, she determined to meet it with as much composure as she could summon.

Nobody but Sheila Macklin knew wholly what she had endured since leaving her childhood's home. When Tunis Latham had come so dramatically into her life she had been almost at the limit of her endurance. To him, even, she had not confessed all her miseries. To escape from them she would have embraced a much more desperate expedient than posing as Ida May Bostwick.

The ethics of the situation had not really impressed her at first. The desire to get away from her unfortunate environment, from the city itself, and to go where nobody knew her history, not even her name, was the main thought at that time in the girl's mind. Tunis Latham's confident assurances that she would be accepted without question by Cap'n Ball and Prudence caused her to put aside all fear of consequences at the moment. It was a desperate stroke, but she had been in desperate need, and she had carried the matter through boldly.

Now that she seemed so securely established in the Ball household and was accepted by all the community of Big Wreck Cove as the real Ida May, it

seemed foolish to give way to anxiety. Discovery of the imposture was remote.

Yet, as she had hinted to Tunis, she had an undercurrent of feeling—a more-than-faint apprehension—that all was not right. Something was lurking in the shadows of the future which menaced their peace and security.

She was ever mindful of the fact that Tunis had gone sponsor for her identity as Ida May. Should her imposture be revealed, her first duty would be to protect him. How could she do this? What tale could she concoct to make it seem that he was as much duped as were Cap'n Ball and Prudence?

This seemed impossible. She saw no way out. He had met the real Ida May Bostwick, and then had deliberately introduced Sheila Macklin as the girl he had been sent for! If the truth were revealed, what explanation could be offered?

Had she allowed her mind to dwell upon this phase of the affair she would surely have revealed to those about her, unobservant as they might be, that she had a secret cause for worry. She must drive it into the back of her mind—ignore it utterly.

And this she did on this beautiful Sabbath morning. When Tunis came up to the Head to accompany the Balls to church—Aunt Lucretia did not attend service on this day—a very close observer would have seen nothing in the girl's look or manner to suggest that so keen an anxiety had touched her.

This should have been Sheila's happy day—and it was. For the first time, the young captain of the *Seamew* linked his interest with her in a deliberate public appearance. Although she feared in secret the result of that appearance at church with Tunis Latham, it nevertheless thrilled her.

He harnessed Queenie after giving that surprised animal such a curry-combing and polishing as she had not

suffered in many a day. Sheila rode with Prudence on the rear seat of the carryall.

"I'm berthed on the for'ard deck along o' you, Tunis," said the old man, hoisting himself with difficulty into the front seat. "If the afterguard is all ready, I be. Trip the anchor, boy, and set sail!"

As they passed down through Portygee Town the denizens of that part of Big Wreck Cove were streaming to their own place of worship. It was a saint's day, and the brown people—both men and women, ringed of ears and garbed in the very gayest colors—gave way with smiles and bows for the jogging old mare and the rumbling carryall. Some of the *Seamew's* crew were overtaken, and they swept off their hats to Prudence and the supposed Ida May, grinning up at Tunis with more than usual friendliness.

"Ah!" exclaimed Eunez Pareta to Johnny Lark, the *Seamew's* cook. "So you know she of the evil eye, eh?"

"What do you mean?" asked Johnny. "That pretty girl who rides behind Captain Latham?"

"Si!"

"She has no evil eye," declared the cook stoutly.

"It is told me that she has," said the smiling girl. "And she has put what you call the 'hoodoo' on that schooner. She come down in her from Boston.

"What of it?" retorted the cook. "She is a fine lady—and a pretty lady."

"So Tuhis Latham think—heh?" demanded Eunez fiercely.

"And why not?" grinned Johnny.

"Bah! Has not all gone wrong with that *Seamew* ever since she sail in the schooner?" demanded the girl. "An anchor chain breaks; a rope parts; you lost a topmast—yes? How about Tony? Has he not left and will not return aboard the schooner for a price? Do you not find calm where other schooners find fair winds? Ah!"



"Pooh!" ejaculated Johnny Lark. "Old woman's talk!"

"Not!" cried the girl hotly. "It is a truth. The saints defend us from the evil eye! And Tunis Latham is under that girl's spell."

Johnny Lark tried to laugh again, but with less success. Many little things had marred the fair course of the *Seamew* and her captain's business. He shook his head, however.

"Not that pretty girl yonder," he said, "has brought bad luck to the *Seamew*. No, no!"

"What, then?" asked Eunez, staring sidewise at him from eyes which seemed almost green.

"See!" said Johnny, seizing her wrist. "If the *Seamew* is a Jonah schooner, it is because of something different. Yes!"

"Bah!" cried Eunez, yet with continued eagerness. "Tell me what it may be if it is not that girl with the evil eye?"

"Ask 'Rion Latham," whispered Johnny. "You know him—huh?"

The Portygee girl looked for a moment rather taken aback. Then she said, tossing her head:

"What if I do know 'Rion?"

"Ask him," repeated Johnny Lark. "He is cousin of our captain. He knows—if anybody knows—what is the trouble with the *Seamew*." And he shook his head.

Eunez stared at him.

"You know something you do not tell me, Juan?"

"Ask 'Rion Latham," the cook said again, and left her at the door of the church.

Those swains who had been "cluttering the course"—to quote Cap'n Ira—did not interfere in any way with the Balls' equipage on this Sunday at the church. There was none who seemed bold enough to enter the lists with Tu-

nis Latham. He put Queenie in the shed and backed her out again and brought her around to the door when the service was ended without having to fight for the privilege.

'Rion Latham, however, was the center of a group of young fellows who were all glad to secure a smile and bow from the girl, but who only sheepishly grinned at Tunis. 'Rion was not smiling; there was a settled scowl upon his ugly face.

"I cal'late," said Cap'n Ira, as they drove away, "that 'Rion must have eat sour pickles for breakfast to-day and nothing much else. Yet he seemed perky enough last night at the sociable. I wonder what's got into him."

"I'd like to get something out of him," growled Tunis, to whom the remark was addressed.

"What's that?"

"Some work, for one thing," said the captain of the *Seamew*. "He's as lazy a fellow as I ever saw. And his tongue's too long."

"Trouble is," Cap'n Ira rejoined, "these trips you take in the schooner are too short to give you any chance to lick your crew into shape. They get back home too often. Too much shore leave, if ye ask me."

"I'd lose Mason Chapin if the *Seamew* made longer voyages. And I have lost one of the hands already—Tony."

"I swan! What's the matter with him?"

"His mother says Tony is scared to sail again with the *Seamew*. Some Portygee foolishness."

"I told you them Portygees warn't worth the grease they sop their bread in," declared Cap'n Ira.

The two on the rear seat of the carry-all paid no attention to this conversation.

"I'm real pleased," said the old woman, "that you are going to dinner with Lucretia Latham, Ida May. Your mother thought a sight of her, and



'Cretia did of Sarah Honey, too. Sarah was one of the few who seemed to understand Lucretia. She's so dumb. I declare I can't never get used to her myself. I like folks lively about me, and I don't care how much they talk—the more the better.

"Lucretia Latham might have got her a good man and been happily married long ago, if it hadn't been that when a feller dropped in to call on her she sat mum all the evening and never said no more than the cat.

"I remember Silas Payson, who lived over beyond the port, took quite a shine to Lucretia, seeing her at church. Or, at least, we thought he did. Silas began going down to Latham's Folly of an evening, now and then, and setting up with Lucretia. But after a while he left off going and said he cal'lated he'd join the Quakers over to Seetawket. Playing Quaker meeting with just one girl to look at didn't suit, noway." And the old woman laughed placidly.

"Tunis says he understands his aunt," ventured the girl.

"Tunis has had to put up with her. But he can say nothing a good deal himself, if anybody should ask ye. That's the only fault I've got with Tunis. I've heard Ira talk at him for a straight hour in our kitchen, and all the answer Tunis made was to say 'yes' twice."

The girl did not find the captain of the *Seamew* at all inarticulate, later, as they crossed the old fields of the Ball place and walked down the slope into the saucerlike valley where lay Latham's Folly. She had never known Tunis to be more companionable than on this occasion. He seemed to have gained the courage to talk on more intimate topics than at any time since their acquaintanceship had begun.

"I guess you know," he observed, "that most all the money Uncle Peke left me—after what the lawyers got—I put into that schooner. There's a

mortgage on her, too. You see, although the old place will come to me by and by, Aunt Lucretia has rights in it while she lives. It's sort of entailed, you know. I could not raise a dollar on Latham's Folly, if I wanted to. So I am pretty well tied up.

"But the schooner is doing well. That is, I mean, business is good, Ida May. Other things being equal, I will make more money with her the way I am doing now than I could in any other business. My line is the sea; I know that. I am fitted for it.

"But if I had invested Uncle Peke's legacy and kept on fishing, or tried for a berth in a deep bottom somewhere, I would not get ahead any faster or make so much money. Besides, long voyages would take me away from home, and, after all, Aunt Lucretia is my only kin and she would miss me sore."

"I am sure she would," said the girl with sympathy.

"But all ain't plain sailing," added the young skipper wistfully. "I am running too close to the reefs right now to crow any."

"But I am sure you will be successful in the end. Of course you will!"

"That's mighty nice of you," he said, smiling down into her vivid face. "With you and Aunt Lucretia both pulling for me, I ought to win out, sure enough.

"You can't fail to like her," he added. "If you just get the right slant on her character, I mean, Ida May. Hers has been a lonely life. Not that there has not almost always been somebody in the house with her. But she has lived with her own thoughts. She reads a great deal. There is not one topic I can broach of which she has not at least a general knowledge. I was sent away to school, but when I came home vacations I brought my books and she read them all.

"And she is a splendid listener." He laughed. "You'll find that out for

yourself, I fancy. And I know she likes people to talk to her—when they have anything to say. Tell her things; that is what she enjoys.”

In spite of his assurances, Sheila Macklin approached the old, brown house behind the cedars with much secret trepidation. Although Aunt Lucretia had a neighbor's girl come in to help her almost daily, she had preferred to prepare the dinner on this occasion with her own hands. And, perhaps, she did not care to have the neighbor's child around when the supposed Ida May came to the house for the first time.

They saw her watching from the side door—a tall, angular figure in a black dress. Her hair was done plainly and in no arrangement to soften the gaunt outline of her face, but there was much of it, and Sheila longed to make a change in that grim coiffure.

The woman smiled so warmly when she saw the two approach that almost instantly the girl forgot the grim contour of Aunt Lucretia's face. That smile was like a flash of sunshine playing over one of those barren, brown fields through which they had passed on the way down from the Ball house.

“This is Ida May, Aunt Lucretia,” said Tunis, as they reached the porch.

The smiling woman stretched forth a hand to the girl. Her eyes, peering through the spectacles, were very keen, and when their gaze was centered upon

the girl's face it seemed that Aunt Lucretia was suddenly smitten by some thought, or by some discovery about the visitor, which made her greeting slow.

Yet that may have been her usual manner. Tunis did not appear to observe anything extraordinary. But Sheila thought Aunt Lucretia had been about to greet her with a kiss, and then had thought better of it.



The reaction she experienced put Sheila in high spirits. Tunis had never seen her in quite this mood.

## CHAPTER XVII.

There was nothing thereafter in Aunt Lucretia's manner—surely not in her speech—to lead Sheila to fear the woman did not accept her at face value. Why should she suspect a masquerade when nobody else did? The girl took her cue from Tunis and placidly accepted his aunt's manner as natural.

Aunt Lucretia put the dinner on the table at once. They ate, when there was special company, in the dining room. The meal was generous in quantity and well cooked. It was evident that, like most country housewives, Lucretia Latham took pride in her table. Had the visitor come for the meal alone she would have been amply recompensed.

But the woman seldom uttered a word, and then only brief questions regarding the service of the food. She listened smilingly to the conversation between Tunis and the visitor, but did not enter into it. It was difficult for the girl to feel at ease under these circumstances.

Especially was this so after dinner, when she asked to help Aunt Lucretia clear off the table and wash and dry the dishes. The woman made no objection; indeed, she seemed to accept the girl's assistance placidly enough. But while they were engaged in the task—a time when two women usually have much to chatter about, if nothing of great importance—Aunt Lucretia uttered scarcely a word, preferring even to instruct her companion in dumb show where the dried dishes should be placed.

Yet, all the time, the girl could not trace anything in Aunt Lucretia's manner or look which actually suggested suspicion or dislike. Tunis seemed eminently satisfied with his aunt's attitude. He whispered to Sheila, when they were alone together:

"She certainly likes you, Ida May."

"Are you sure?" the girl asked.

"Couldn't be mistaken. But don't expect her to tell you so in just so many words."

Later they walked about the doorway and outbuildings—Tunis and the visitor—and Aunt Lucretia watched them from her rocking-chair on the porch. What her thoughts were regarding her nephew and the girl it would be hard to guess, but whatever they were, they made her face no grimmer than usual, and the light in her bespectacled eyes was scarcely one of dislike or even of disapproval. Yet there was a strange something in the woman's look or manner which suggested that she watched the visitor with thoughts or feelings which she wished neither the girl nor Tunis to observe.

Late in the afternoon the two young people started back for the Ball house, taking a roundabout way. They did not even follow the patrol path, well defined along the brink of Wreckers' Head as far as the beach. Instead, they went down by the wagon track to the beach itself, intending to follow the edge of the sea and the channel around to a path that led up the face of the bluff to the Ball homestead. It was a walk the girl had never taken.

The reaction she experienced after having successfully met and become acquainted with Aunt Lucretia put Sheila in high spirits. Tunis had never seen her in quite this mood. Although she was always cheerful and not a little gay about the Ball homestead, she suddenly achieved a spirit of sportiveness which surprised the captain of the *Seamew*. But he wholly liked and approved of this new mood.

She had made herself a new fall frock and a pretty, close-fitting hat—something entirely different, as he had noticed, from the styles displayed by the other girls of Big Wreck Cove. And he was observant enough to see that this outfit was more like what the girls in Boston wore.

She ran ahead to pick up a shell or pebble that gleamed at the water's edge from a long way off. She escaped a wetting from the surf by a scant margin, and laughed delightedly at the chance she took. Back against the foot of the bluff certain brilliant flowers grew—fall blossoms that equaled any in Prudence Ball's garden—and the girl gathered these and arranged them in an attractive bouquet with a regard for color that delighted her companion.

They came, finally, in sight of a cabin back under the bank on the far side of the little cove, where once Tunis had reaped clams while Cap'n Ira and the Queen of Sheba made their unfortunate slide down the face of the bluff. The sea was so low now that Tunis could aid the girl across the mouth of the tiny inlet on the sand bar which defended it from the sea. There was but one channel over which she need leap with his help.

The cabin captivated Sheila, especially when she learned it was no longer occupied. It had a tight tin roof and a cement-pipe chimney with a cap to keep the rain out. The window sashes had been carried away and the door hung by a single hinge. However, the one-roomed cabin was otherwise tight and dry.

"Sometimes fishing parties from the port come around here and camp for a day or two," explained Tunis. "But Hosea Westcott used to live here altogether. Even in the winter. He caught his own fish and split and dried them; he dug clams and picked beach plums and sold them in town, or swapped them for what he needed. Sometimes the neighbors gave him a day's work."

"An old and lonely man, Tunis?" the girl murmured.

"That is what he was. All his immediate family was gone. So, when he fell ill one winter and one of the

coast guards found him here almost starved and helpless, they took him away to the poor farm."

They went on around the end of the headland and walked up the beach toward the port. Before they reached the path by which they intended to mount to the summit of Wreckers' Head, they observed another couple going in the same direction, following the edge of the water on the firm strand. The woman was dressed in such brilliant hues that she could be mistaken for nobody but a resident of Portygee Town.

"That is the daughter of Pareta, who brought up your trunk when you came here, Ida May," said Tunis carelessly.

"But do you see who the man is?" she said, with some surprise. "It is your cousin."

"'Rion? So it is. Well," he said rather scornfully, "no accounting for tastes. She's a decent-enough girl, I guess, but we don't mix much with the Portygees. Although most of them are all right folks, at that. But footing around those girls sometimes starts trouble, as 'Rion ought to know by this time."

As they climbed the path, Tunis aiding his companion at certain places, the girl, looking down, thought they were being closely watched by the other couple on the beach. There was nothing in this to disturb her mind; a feeling of confidence had overcome her since her experience with Aunt Lucretia. Her present environment was so far from the scenes of her old pain and misery that it seemed nothing actually could disturb her again!

The peacefulness of the scene impressed Tunis as well. When they came up finally upon the brink of the headland they saw a spiral of smoke rising from one of the chimneys of the distant Ball homestead. The man pointed to it and, smiling down upon her, repeated

a verse he had read somewhere which he knew expressed the hope she held:

"I knew by the way the smoke gracefully curled

Above the green elms that a cottage was near,  
And I knew that if peace could be found in the world

A heart that was humble might look for it here."

"That is pretty near right, don't you think, Ida May?"

"It is, indeed! Oh, it is!" she cried. "And my heart ~~is~~ humble, Tunis. I feel that God has been very good to me—and you," she added softly.

"I've been mighty good to myself," he responded. "Ida May, there never was a girl just like you, I guess. Anyway, I never saw such a one. I—I don't know just how to put it, but I feel that you are the only girl in the world I can ever feel the same toward."

"Tunis!"

He took her hand, looking so hungrily into her face that she, blushing, if not confused, could not bear his gaze, and the long lashes drooped to veil the violet eyes.

"You understand me, Ida May?" whispered the captain of the *Seamew* eagerly. "I don't know, fixed as I am, that I've any right to talk to you like this. But—but I can't wait any longer!"

She allowed her hand to remain in his warm clasp, and now she looked up at him again.

"Have you thought of what all this may mean, Tunis?" she asked.

"You bet I have. I haven't been thinking of much else—not since the first time I saw you."

"What? You felt—felt that you could like me that night when we sat on the bench so long on the Common?"

"My Godfrey, Ida May!" he exclaimed. "Since that time you slipped on the sidewalk in front of that restaurant and I caught you. That's when I first knew that you were the most wonderful girl in the world!"

"Oh, Tunis! Do you mean that?"

"I certainly do," he said stoutly.

"That—that you thought *that*? At very first sight?"

"I couldn't get you out of my mind. I went about in a sort of dream. Why, Ida May, when Cap'n Ira and Aunt Prue talked so much about wanting that other girl down here, all I could think of was you! I half believed it must be you that they sent me for—until I came face to face with that other girl."

Her face dimpled suddenly; her eyes shone. The look she gave him passed through Tunis Latham like an electric shock. He trembled. He would have drawn her closer.

"Not here, Tunis," she whispered. "But if you dare take me—knowing what and who I am—I am all yours. Whenever you feel that you can take me I shall be ready. Can I say more, Tunis?"

He looked at her solemnly. "I am the happiest man alive. I am the happiest man alive, Ida May!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

The *Seamew* sailed next day, short-handed. Not only had Tony, the boy, left, but one of the foremast hands did not put in an appearance. A grinning Portygee boy came to the wharf and announced that "Paul, he iss ver' seek."

Tunis knew it would be useless to go after the man, just as it had been useless to go after Tony. He had been unable to ship another boy in Tony's place, and when he let it be known among the dock laborers and loungers about Luiz Wharf that there was a berth open in the *Seamew's* fore-castle, nobody applied for it.

"What is the matter with those fellows?" the skipper asked Mason Chapin. "They were tumbling over each other a few weeks ago to join us, and now there isn't an offer."



"Some Portygee foolishness," grumbled the mate.

"I wonder," muttered Tunis.

"You wonder if it's so?" queried the mate. "You know how silly these people are once they get a crazy notion in their heads."

"What's the crazy notion, Mr. Chapin?"

The mate flung up his hands and shrugged his shoulders.

"A haunt—a jinx—*something*. The Lord knows!"

"I wonder if it is a Portygee notion or something else," said Tunis Latham, his eyes fixed on the back of Orion, busy, for once, at the other rail.

"Whatever it is, Captain Latham," said Mason Chapin with gravity, "I suggest you fill your berths at Boston."

"Guess I'll have to. But the off-scourings of the city docks! They will be worse than these Portygees."

It was not a prospect he welcomed. He well knew the sort of dock rats he must put up with if he wished to make up his crew with city hands for a short trip. The sea tramps who are within the reach of coasting skippers are the same kind of worthless material that shiftless farmers must depend upon in harvest time.

Even the lack of one man forward, to say nothing of the cook's boy, made a considerable difference in the working of the schooner. 'Rion Latham loudly proclaimed that he was being imposed upon when he was forced to work with the captain's watch. He had shipped as supercargo and clerk, he had! This treatment was an imposition.

"You know what you can do about it, 'Rion, if you like," the skipper said to him calmly, but aside. "I wouldn't want to feel that I was holding you to a job that you did not like. You can leave the *Seamew* any time you want."

"Huh! The rats will be doing that soon enough," growled 'Rion.

But he did not say this where Captain Latham could hear. It was Horry Newbegin who heard him.

"It strikes me, young feller, that if I quarreled with my victuals and drink the way you do, I'd get me another berth and get shet of all this." And the old salt wagged his head. "I don't get you at all, 'Rion."

"You wait," growled the younger man. "I'll leave at the right time. And if things go as I expect, everybody else will leave him flat, too."

"You're taking a chance talking that way," admonished the old man. "It's just as much mutiny as though you turned and hit the skipper or the mate."

"It is, is it? I'll show him!"

"Show who?" asked Horry, in some wonder at the other's spitefulness.

"That dratted cousin of mine. Thinks he owns the earth and sea, as well as this hoodooed tub of a schooner. Gets the best of everything. But he won't always. He never ought to have got the money to buy this old tub."

"You said you wouldn't have her for a gift," chuckled the old man.

"But that don't make it any the more right that he should have her. And she is hoodooed. You know she is, Horry."

The old mariner was silent. 'Rion craftily went on:

"Look what a number of things have happened since he put this derved schooner into commission. We broke an anchor chain in Paulmouth Harbor, didn't we? And the old mud hook lies there to this day. Did you ever see so many halyards snap in your life, and in just a capful of wind? Didn't we have a tops'l carried away—clean—in that squall off Swampscott? And now the hands are leaving her."

"Guess you know something about that," growled Horry.

'Rion grinned.

"Maybe I do. I don't say 'no' and I don't say 'yes.' However, we've all



got to work like dogs to make up for being short-handed."

"Nobody is kicking much but you," said the older man.

"That's all right. I've got pluck enough not to stand being put upon. Them Portygees—well, there's no figuring on what they will do."

"I can see you are bent on making them do something that will raise trouble," Newbegin said, shaking his head once more.

"What do you expect? You know the *Seamew* is hoodooed. Huh! '*Seamew*!' That ain't no more her rightful name than it is mine."

"I wouldn't say that."

"I would!" snapped 'Rion. "She's the *Marlin B.*, out o' Salem. No matter what he says, or anybody else. She's the murder ship. If he sailed her over that place outside o' Salem Harbor where those poor fellows was drowned, they'd rise again and curse the schooner and all aboard her."

The old man shuddered. He turned his face away and spat reflectively over the rail. The tug of the steering chains to starboard was even then thrilling the cords of his hands and arms with an almost electric shock. 'Rion watched him slyly. He knew the impression he was making on the old man's superstitious mind. He played upon it as he did upon the childish minds of the Portygee seamen.

So Captain Tunis Latham did not arrive in Boston in a very calm frame of mind. Although he had no words with 'Rion, and really no trouble with the crew in general, he felt that trouble was brewing. And the worst of it was, it was trouble which he did not know how to avert.

It was not so easy to fill the empty berth in the fore-castle, even from the offscourings of the docks. It was a time when dock labor was at a premium. And short voyages never did

interest good sailormen. In addition, knowing that the *Seamew* sailed from her home port, decent seafarers wanted to know what was the matter with her that the captain could not fill his fore-castle at that end.

These men wondered about Captain Latham, too. They judged that infirmities of temper must be the reason his men did not stay with the schooner. He was, perhaps, a driver—too quick with his fist or the toe of his boot. Questions along this line, were bound to breed answers—and answers from those members of the *Seamew's* crew who were not friendly to the skipper.

In some little den off Commercial Street 'Rion Latham had forgathered with certain dock loiterers, and, after that, word went to and fro that the *Seamew* was haunted. If she ever sailed off Great Misery Island, the crew of a run-under Salem fishing smack would rise up to curse the schooner's company. And that curse would follow those who sailed aboard her—either for'ard or in the afterguard—for all time. In consequence of this the only man who applied for the empty berth aboard the *Seamew* was more than a little drunk and so dirty that Captain Latham would not let him come over the rail.

Nor could the young shipmaster give much time to looking up hands. He had freight ready for his return trip. It must be got aboard, stowed properly, and advantage taken of the tide and a fair wind to get back to the Cape. He had not been in the habit of going up into the city at all of late. If that girl behind the lace counter of Hoskin & Marl's had expected to see Tunis Latham again, she had been disappointed. Her warm invitation to him to call on her—possibly to take her again to lunch—had borne only Dead Sea fruit. He had accepted her decision regarding the Balls and Cape Cod as final and irrevocable. At least, he

had had no intention of ever going back and discussing the suggestion again.

The possibility of the real Ida May Bostwick changing her mind and reconsidering her refusal to communicate with the Balls or visit Wreckers' Head never once entered Tunis' mind, if it had Sheila Macklin's. He had seen how scornfully the cheap, little shop-girl had refused the kind offer extended to her by her old relatives. He could not have imagined her thinking of the old people and their home and Big Wreck Cove in any different way.

He was quite right in this. Ida May Bostwick never would have looked upon these several matters differently. The thing was settled. Born and bred in the city, she could not conceive of any sane girl like herself deliberately burying herself down on the Cape, to "live on pollock and potatoes," as she had heard it expressed, and be the slave of a pair of old fogies.

Not for her! She would not think of it. Indeed, this phase of the offer Tunis had brought her really made Ida May Bostwick angry. What did he think she was, anyway? In fact, she was inclined to think that that seafaring person had almost insulted her. Although she had deliberately spoken of him as her "Cousin Tunis" to the girls who were her confidantes in the store and to her landlady, who was likewise curious about him, Ida May Bostwick was not much pleased by the thought of him.

Then she began to compare Tunis with the young men she knew in Boston. She knew that the young men she got acquainted with were either very light minded or downright objectionable. If any of them contemplated marriage at all, they knew it could not be undertaken upon the meager salaries they were paid. Marriage meant teamwork, with the girl working down-town just as hard as ever, and then

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working at night when she went home, and on Sundays, even if she and her bridegroom lived only in a furnished room and did light housekeeping.

Ida May Bostwick had a brain explosion one day when she considered these facts. She said:

"I bet *that* fellow wouldn't expect his wife to stand behind a lace counter and take the sass of floorwalkers and buyers, as well as lady customers, all day long. Not much! He's a regular guy, if he is a hick. My gracious! Don't I wish he'd come back! If I ever get my claws on him again——"

Just what she might do to Tunis under those circumstances she did not even explain to herself. But she began to think of Tunis a good deal. He was a good-looking man, too. And he spent freely. Ida May Bostwick remembered the lunch at Barquette's.

It was true that Sarah Honey had been all Prudence Ball and Aunt Lucretia Latham and other Wreckers' Head folk believed her to be. But she died when Ida May was small, and the girl had been brought up wholly under the influence of the Bostwicks. That family had lacked refinement and breeding and graciousness of manner to a degree that would have amazed and shocked Sarah Honey's relatives down on the Cape.

Not that the girl thought of Tunis Latham's refinement with any wistfulness. She thought of his well-filled wallet, that he was something more than a common sailor, that he undoubtedly owned a good home, even if it was down at Big Wreck Cove, and that he seemed "soft" and "easy."

"A girl might wind him right around her finger, if she went at it right," Ida May Bostwick finally decided. "Some girl will. I wonder how long it would take to get him to sell out down there and live up here in town? My mother come from that awful hole, and she caught a city fellow. I bet I could do

this, if it was worth my while. My goodness! Why not?

"There's property there, too. I wonder how much those old creatures are worth. And how long they will live. He spoke like they needed somebody because they were sick. Ugh! I don't like folks when they are sick. Ma was *awful*. I can remember it. And there was pa, when he was crippled with rheumatism before he died."

This phase of the matter fairly staggered Ida May Bostwick. She put the faint glimmerings of the idea out of her mind—or tried to. Yet, that summer she kept delaying her vacation until all the other girls had come back and related all their adventures—those that had actually happened and those that they had imagined.

"Ain't you going to take any time off, Ida May?" they asked.

At last she said she expected to visit her folks "down on the Cape."

"You remember that nice-looking farmer that came in to speak to me that time and took me to lunch at Barquette's?" she asked Miss Leary.

"I know you *said* he took you there."

"Well, he did, smarty! He's my cousin—of course, not too close." And Ida May giggled. "Well, we've been corresponding."

"I hope it's all perfectly proper," grinned Miss Leary.

Ida May Bostwick stuck out her tongue. But she laughed.

"I've got a good mind," she said to her friend, "to go down and see that fellow's folks. They're well fixed, I guess. And the store pays you for one week of your vacation. I wouldn't lose much, even if it does turn out to be a dead-and-alive hole."

#### CHAPTER XIX.

There was a driving road down past Latham's Folly and on across certain sand flats and by cranberry bogs to a small settlement where Prudence had

a stepsister still living. This old woman lived with her granddaughter's husband's kinsfolk, who were so distantly related to Cap'n Ira's wife that the relationship could scarcely be followed.

"It takes us Cape Codders," remarked Cap'n Ira, "to study out the shoals and channels of kinship. It's 'cause we're such good navigators that we're able to do it."

"And now that we've got Ida May to harness up Queenie for us and look after the house while we're gone, and you feel so much spryer yourself, Ira, I don't see why we can't visit our folks a little," Prudence said.

He agreed, and they set off in high fettle just before noon, expecting to return before dark. Sheila was upstairs dusting when, not long after the noon hour, she saw from one of the windows the spread canvas of the *Seamew*—there was no mistaking the schooner—making through the channel into the cove.

"Tunis is coming! Tunis is coming!"

Her heart sang the refrain over and over again. She fairly danced about the household tasks she had set herself to do while the old couple were absent. Now and again she ran to some point where she could watch the *Seamew*. The memory of Tunis' kisses were on her lips and in her heart. In the dusk of the previous Monday morning, when he was on his way to the port to take command of his schooner, the young shipmaster had held her in his arms at the back door there, and had told her over and over again of his love for her. Thought of that moment was an exquisite memory to the girl.

She saw the schooner drop anchor off Portygee Town, with all its canvas rattling down in windrows of white. She even saw the little gig launched. Tunis was coming ashore. He would soon be up the hill. His long strides would soon bring him to her side again—open-

eyed, ruddy-faced, a veritable sea god among men!

She ran out a dozen times to gaze down the road and wonder what kept him. Then she turned her back on the road and spent the next half hour in beating the dust out of all the parlor and sitting room sofa pillows.

Peace, like the sunshine itself, lay over all of Wreckers' Head. Here and there a spiral of smoke rose from a chimney, and fowl wandered about the well-reaped fields. But not much other life was visible. The fall haze gave to distant objects a dimmer outline, softening the sharp lineaments of the more rugged landscape. Color and form took on new beauty.

It was all so lovely, so peaceful, that it was impossible that the girl should have dreamed of what was approaching. Since she had come her mind had not been so far from apprehension of disaster. Since Sunday, when she had wandered with Tunis along the shore, it had seemed to the young woman that no harm could assail her. She was secure, sheltered, impreguably fortified both in Tunis' love and in the situation she had gained with the Balls and in the community.

She knew, at last, that somebody was on the road, but she would not look. She heard the latch of the gate and the creak of its hinges. Somebody was behind her. How softly Tunis stepped! She thought that he was approaching her quietly, believing he could surprise her. In a moment she would feel his arms about her and would surprise him by laying her head back against his breast and putting up her lips to be kissed.

But, as he delayed, she turned her head ever so slyly. It was not the heavily shod feet of Tunis Latham she saw. What she saw was a pair of the very lightest of pearl-gray shoes, wonderful of arch and heel. Above were slim

ankles and calves incased in fiber-silk hose the hue of the shoes.

She flashed a glance at the face of the stranger, and her gaze was immediately held by a pair of fixed brown eyes. There were green glints in the eyes—sharp, suspicious gleams that warned Sheila, before the other uttered a word, to set watch and ward upon her own lips. Not that she suspected who the stranger was.

"Good afternoon," was her greeting.

"Is this where the Balls live?" was the demand, with a note in the voice which betokened both weariness and vexation.

"Yes."

The girl set down her bag and gave a sigh of relief.

"Well, I am glad! I thought I'd never get here. I never did hear of such a hick place! No taxi, of course, and not even a hack or any other carriage to be hired. I've walked *miles*."

The parlor settee and easy-chairs had been brought outdoors for their weekly beating and dusting. Sheila pointed to a seat.

"Do sit down," she urged. "It is a long walk from the port."

"You said it! And after riding over from Paulmouth in that dinky old stagecoach, too," went on the stranger, as though holding Sheila responsible for some measure of her discomfort. "Say, ain't the folks home?" She cast a sour look about the premises. "Gee! It's a lonesome place in winter, I bet."

"Did you wish to see Mrs. Ball?" asked Sheila, eying the visitor with nothing more than curiosity.

"I guess so. She is Mrs. Prudence Ball, isn't she?"

"Yes. Mrs. Ball and the captain have gone away for the day. I am ever so sorry. You wished to see her particularly?"

"I guess I did." The stranger looked her over with more interest. "Say, how old are the Balls?"

The abrupt question drew a more penetrating look from Sheila. The visitor certainly was not Cape bred. Her smart cheapness did not attract Sheila at all. There was something so unwholesome about her that the observer had difficulty in suppressing a shudder. Yet her prettiness was orchidlike. But there are poisonous orchids.

"They are quite old people," Sheila said, finally answering the question. "Cap'n Ira is over seventy and Prudence is not far from that age. You—you are not acquainted with them?"

"I never saw 'em. But I've heard a lot about 'em," said the stranger, with a light laugh. "They are sort of relations of mine."

"You are a relative?" asked the girl. Even then she had no thought of who this newcomer was. "Cap'n Ira's relative? Or Mrs. Ball's?"

"Well, I guess it is the old woman's. But I'm kind of curious to see 'em first, you know, before I make any strong play in the relationship game. Gee! Is this the parlor furniture?"

"Some of it," was the wondering rejoinder.

"Looks like the house, don't it? Down at the heel and shabby. Say, have they got much money, after all—them Balls? You're a neighbor, I suppose? You must know 'em well."

"I live here," said the other girl rather sternly.

"Huh? You mean around here?"

"I live here with Cap'n Ira and Mrs. Ball," was the further explanation.

"You do? You?"

Her voice suddenly became shrill. It rose half an octave with surprise. Her gaze, which had merely been insolent, now became suspicious. She scrutinized Sheila closely.

"I didn't know the Balls had anybody living with 'em," she resumed at length. "You ain't been here long, have you?"

"Oh, for some time," was the cheerful rejoinder.

"They hire you?"

"Not—not exactly. You see, I am sort of related to them, too."

"A relation of this old Cap'n Ira?"

"Of Mrs. Ball."

"Huh! Say, what's your name?"

"My name is Bostwick," was the composed reply. "You did not mention yours, did you?"

"Bostwick?"

"They call me Ida May Bostwick," said Sheila, demurely smiling, and even then without a suspicion of the vortex into which she was being drawn.

"Ida May Bostwick!"

The visitor rose out of her seat as though a spring had been released under her. Her eyes flattened, distended, and sparkled like micaceous rock in the dark. Her hands clenched till the pointed, highly polished nails bit into the palms.

"What do you say? You are Ida May Bostwick?"

At that moment Sheila Macklin saw the light. It smote upon her brain like a shaft from a great searchlight; a penetrating, cleaving beam that might have laid bare her very soul before the accusing stranger. She staggered, retreating, shrinking, but only for a moment.

The pallor that had come into her face left it. Color rose softly under the exquisite skin, and there came a haughty uplift of her chin. She stared back into the blazing, greenish-brown eyes of the other, her own eyes unafraid, challenging.

"Do you doubt me?" she demanded, with as much composure as though a secure position and a conscience quite at ease were hers. "Who are you? In what way are you interested in my name or in my identity?"

"Why, you—you—" The visitor was for the moment stricken speechless. But it was the speechlessness of rage—of wild and uncontrollable fury. Then she caught her breath. "You



"You dirty cheat! You stand there and tell me you are Ida Bostwick? You've got gall—you cert'nly *have* got gall!"

dirty cheat, you! You stand there and tell me you are Ida Bostwick? You've got gall—you cert'nly *have* got gall!

"I'd like to know who the devil you are? Comin' right here, wormin' your way into a place that don't belong to you, gettin' on the soft side of my aunt an' uncle, I s'pose, and thinkin' to grab all they got when they die. Oh, I know *your* kind, miss!

"But I'll show you up. I'll let 'em know what's what and who's who.

They must be precious soft to take a girl like you in and think she's Ida Bostwick. How *dare* you?"

She stamped her foot. She advanced upon the other threateningly. But the girl she had accused did not retreat. The flush of outrage and that haughty expression were still upon her countenance. She spoke very firmly but in a voice so low that it contrasted the more sharply with the enraged squall of her opponent. She asked:



"Who are you, if you please?"

"You've cheek to ask me. I'd ought to spit on you, so I had! But I'll tell you who I am—and it'll hold you for a while, I guess. I am Ida May Bostwick. You know full and well you are makin' out to these rich relations of mine that you are me. I'll show you up, miss! I'll have you whipped—or jailed—or something. The gall of you!"

The other girl heard her with unchanging face. Somehow, that steady, unshrinking look gave Ida May Bostwick pause. It was she who recoiled.

#### CHAPTER XX.

The girl who had seized upon the chance of becoming Ida May Bostwick, and so escaping the horror and despair that enshrouded Sheila Macklin like a filthy mantle, stood after the first blast as firm as a rock under the torrent of vituperation and rage which poured from the other girl's lips.

The real Ida May—weak, save in venomous hate, unstable as water, as shallow as a pool of glass—could have joined issue in a hair-pulling, face-scratching brawl. She was of that breed and upbringing.

Sheila Macklin's very dignity held Ida May Bostwick at arm's length. With all right and title to the name and place Sheila had usurped, the new arrival was awed by the impostor's look. Following that first—and merely instantaneous—expression of horrified surprise at Ida May's announcement of her identity, this girl, who was so secure in the confidence of the Balls and the community, proceeded to look down at the claimant of her achieved position with utter calmness.

It made the real Ida May almost afraid. Certain as she was of her own name and the assertion of her own personality, the bold and unshaken opposition confronting her in the very look

of the impostor abashed Ida May Bostwick. After her first outbreak she was silenced.

"Do you really know what you are saying?" the girl in possession asked. "Are you aware that I am Ida May Bostwick? There certainly cannot be two girls of the same name, both related to Mrs. Prudence Ball. That is too ridiculous."

The other gasped. Though red and white by turn, from impotence and rage, her fury was quelled under the look of the more composed young woman. For the moment this person who had infolded herself in the cloak of Ida May Bostwick's identity had much the better of the argument.

"There are twenty people almost within call who know me and who can swear to my name and my assertions that I am Miss Bostwick," went on Sheila, with a calmness which both frightened and daunted the other. "Just why you should come here and make such a preposterous claim I cannot understand. Where do you come from? Who are you—really?"

Ida May stared, flaccid, helpless. For the time being all her rage, her rudeness, her amazement, even, drained out of her. For this impostor to face her down in this way; for her to claim Ida May's name and identity with such utter calm—such sang-froid; for Sheila to stand before her and deliberately declare that what Ida May had known to be her own all her life long—her name and distinctive character—was actually another's—all this was so monstrous a thing that Ida May was stunned.

Suppose—suppose something had really happened to her mind? People did go mad, Ida May had heard. She had rather a vague idea as to what insanity was like, but she felt her mind slipping.

The sure and unafraid expression of the other girl's countenance gave Ida May no help at all. She was sure that

her opponent had not lost her mind. She was just a wicked, bad, horrid girl who had somehow got something that belonged to Ida May Bostwick, and meant to keep it if she could.

Self-pity filled the visitor's mind in place of the fury she had expended in her first outburst. She dared not attack the other with tooth and nail, for she saw now that this girl was as much her superior in physical strength as she was in strength of character.

Therefore, Ida May fell back upon tears. She blubbered right heartily, and, being really weary after her walk from the port, she fell back into the spring rocker, which squeaked almost as protestingly as she did, put her be-ringed hands before her face, and gave herself to grief.

Sheila Macklin's expression did not change. She revealed no sympathy for Ida May Bostwick. If she felt sympathy, it was for that girl who had been persecuted, unfairly accused of stealing, sent to a place worse than prison, afterward branded with the stigma of "jailbird;" that girl whom Tunis Latham had befriended, had rescued from a situation which she could not think of now without a feeling of creeping horror.

Was she going to give over without a fight to this new claimant a place which had been and still was her only refuge? It could not be expected that she would do this. She had had no warning of this catastrophe. There had been no opportunity to prepare for a situation which must have shocked her terribly in any case. But if she had only had time—

Time? Time for what? To run away? Or to prepare the Balls, for instance, for the coming of this new claimant? And who knew this girl who said she was Ida May Bostwick? Sheila Macklin was fully aware of the history of Sarah Honey, of her marriage which had quite cut her off from

her Cape Cod friends, and of the little that was known at Big Wreck Cove about her daughter, who, since babyhood, had never been seen here.

How was one to be sure if this were really the right Ida May? If one girl could make the claim and carry it through so easily, why not another? How could this girl, crying in the rocking-chair, prove her statement that she was Mrs. Ball's niece?

These thoughts seethed in Sheila Macklin's brain. She must keep cool! She must hold herself down, keep control of her own mind, and keep the whip hand of this girl before her.

And, then, there was Tunis to think of. The appearance of the real Ida May Bostwick wrecked all her happiness, of course, with Tunis. Sheila could not let him continue his association with her. Yet what course should she pursue to save him? That suddenly became the first consideration in Sheila Macklin's mind.

How to do this? How to save Tunis from being overwhelmed by the result of his own ill-considered deed? Impulse and love on Tunis Latham's part had brought about this terrible situation. Not that the girl blamed him in the least. Her thought was to protect the captain of the *Seamew* from being sucked into the whirlpool which she clearly beheld beside her path.

Save Tunis! It must be done. This little, inconsequential, weak-minded, loose-lipped girl must not be allowed to wreck Tunis Latham's life. If people came to accept as true the tale the girl could relate, Tunis' reputation would be smirched utterly in the opinion of all Big Wreck Cove folk.

Much as Sheila Macklin felt that her own happiness with Tunis was now impossible—a flash of Aunt Lucretia made this realization the more poignant—he must be sheltered from any folly regarding this thing. She knew well his impulsive, generous nature.

Who had a fuller knowledge of it than she?

She must think and act for herself, without any conference with Tunis. But she must do the only thing, after all, that would balk this wretched girl from the city—for a time, at least.

The real Ida May Bostwick had no friends here and no acquaintances among the people of Big Wreck Cove. It would be no easy matter for her to establish either credit or the fact of her identity in the community. It would take time and perhaps be very difficult for Ida May to bring forward conclusive evidence that would convince the Balls, or anybody else, of her real personality and prove that the girl in possession was an impostor.

All the latter had to do was to maintain her already-accepted standing, deny the true Ida May's claim, and demand that the latter show proof of her apparently preposterous statement. At least, some considerable delay must ensue through Sheila's course before the girl could convince anybody that she only claimed what was her own.

Nor need the battle end there. Ida May Bostwick might find it very difficult to prove to the satisfaction of all concerned that she was the actual niece of Prudence Ball. The very fact that Tunis had brought Sheila and introduced her as the girl he had been sent for was proof so strong that it could not be lightly denied.

That phase of the matter—that Tunis was as deep in the conspiracy as she was herself—made Sheila Macklin desperate. She grasped at this only salvation—straw as it was!—for his sake more than for her own.

Later, when she was able to think and plan and plot again, she would evolve some method of rescuing Tunis from the results of his own impulsiveness and her weakness in accepting his suggestion as a way out of her personal difficulties. She should have known

better! She should have scouted the idea at its inception!

She saw now that this position in which she was placed was far and away more serious than that she had been in when she sat with Tunis upon the Boston Common bench. She had thought at that time that it needed little more to make her condition too desperate to bear. She would now, she felt, give life itself for the privilege of being back there and able to refuse the reckless plan of escape the captain of the *Scamew* had submitted to her.

She did not for a breath's length blame Tunis for the misfortune that had overtaken her—overtaken them both, indeed. She had accepted his plan with open eyes. In her desperation she had even foreseen the possibility of this outcome. She must blame nobody but herself.

But all these thoughts were futile. No use in considering for a single moment past situations and possibilities. She was confronted by a grim and adamant present! And that grim present was in the person of a girl with tear-streaked face who looked up at her, sobbing.

"You're the meanest girl I ever heard of. I'll pay you for this. Think of the gall of you comin' here and tellin' my rich relations you was me. I never heard of such a thing! It beats the movies, and I thought they was just lies. Gee, but you must be a regular crook! I expect the very clothes you got on my aunt bought and gave you. I'll put you where you belong!"

"And suppose I put you where you seem to belong?" interrupted the girl in possession. "There is such a place as an insane hospital in this county, I believe. I think you must have either escaped from such a place, or that you belong in one."

"Oh!" gasped the other girl, staring up at her amazedly and not a little terrified by Sheila's emphatic speech.

"If you really are some distant relative of the family," the latter continued, "Mrs. Ball may wish to see you. Come into the house and I will make you a cup of tea. You need it. And you can wait for Mrs. Ball and the captain to return, if you like."

Ida May darted to her feet again.

"A cup of tea of *your* making!" she cried. "You'd put poison in it! You must be a wicked girl—anybody can see that. I wouldn't put anything bad past you. I guess them stories in the movies ain't so much lies, after all."

"I want nothing from you, whoever you are, only my name back and the chance you have grabbed off here. I'll go to the neighbors about it. I'll tell 'em what you've done. I guess I can find somebody to believe me."

Her abrupt halt warned Sheila that there was somebody approaching. Before she could turn to see who it was, the other girl ejaculated:

"My goodness! What is it—a junk wagon? Look at that horse, will you! Say! Who's these folks? What a pair of old dubs!"

Cap'n Ira and Prudence had returned somewhat earlier than Sheila had expected. Old Queenie came up the lane and turned in at the open gateway beyond the garden, putting one foot before the other in a protesting way and hanging her head as though she had to smell out the path rather than see it. But that was always her way in harness.

The new girl tugged excitedly at Sheila's arm.

"Say! Who are they?" she demanded huskily.

"This is Cap'n Ball and Mrs. Ball," was the reply, and the girl in possession hurried forward to help them out of the carriage.

"Ahoy, Ida May!" the captain hailed cheerfully. "What's the good word?"

He prepared to climb down. The girl assisted Prudence first.

"Who's that with you, Ida May?"

asked the old woman. Then, with keener eyes than the captain, she observed the change in the girl's face. "What's happened? Something has gone wrong, Ida May, I know. What is it?"

"That—that girl——"

Sheila almost choked. How could she prevaricate to the good old woman who had been so kind to her?

"Who is she, Ida May?"

"She says she is your niece," whispered the girl.

"My niece? Land's sake! I ain't got no niece but you, Ida May. Say, Ira, do you know this young woman? She ain't none o' your relations, is she?"

Cap'n Ira came to the ground finally with a thump of his cane. He straightened up and stared at the new arrival.

"Red-headed, I swan!" he muttered. "Never was a Ball that I know of with that color topknot. And she looks like one o' these sandpipers ye see along shore. Look at that hat!"

"Hush, Ira! Don't you know her?"

"I cal'late I don't. A book agent, maybe?"

"Ida May says she claims to be our niece," Prudence told him.

"I swan! I told you we was gettin' mighty popular."

Sheila, her limbs now trembling so that she feared she would fall, took Queenie by the head and backed the carriage around. The old mare would have to be put in her stall and the carry-all run under cover. But the girl was fearful of moving out of earshot.

Cap'n Ira and Prudence approached the real Ida May. The latter had been staring at them, marveling. Unlike Sheila, almost everything that Ida May Bostwick thought was advertised upon her face, and as she thought it.

"My goodness!" considered Ida May. "What a pair of hicks!"

"You was lookin' for somebody named Ball, I cal'late?" Cap'n Ira said within Sheila's hearing as she led the gray mare away.

She could not catch the reply. Whatever the real Ida May said, she could not stand by to deny it. Besides, the matter must rest for the present on the evidence, and she did not know yet how much proof Ida May might be able to advance to strengthen her case. If it rested upon mere assertion, then Sheila need merely deny its truth and hold her own!

And, frightened as she was, that was exactly what Sheila intended to do. For the sake of Tunis, as well as for her own salvation, she must stand up against the new girl and hold by her own first claim—that she was the girl the Balls had sent Tunis for.

#### CHAPTER XXI.

Sheila Macklin got Queenie to the stable and unharnessed her. She ran the carryall into the barn and then closed the big door for the night, although the sun was still an hour high. She stopped to fling grain to the poultry, too. These chores she did with the thought in her mind that she might never do them again for Cap'n Ira and Prudence.

If that girl could prove her claim, if she could satisfy the old people that they had been cheated by Sheila and Tunis Latham, they might be indignant enough to put her right out—to-night!

The trio had disappeared into the house. She heard voices from the sitting-room. But she wanted to return the furniture to the front room and finish the task which the real Ida May's coming had interrupted.

She had been strong enough when she carried the chairs and the settee into the yard, but she could scarcely get them back again. The strength seemed to have deserted her arms. She staggered in with the last article of furniture and set it in place. Then she sat down.

The murmur of voices from the room

across the hall was steady. What were they saying? What had Ida May told them? How were the Balls taking it? Could that cheap, little thing convince the old people that she was their niece and that the girl they had come to love and trust was an impostor? Sheila Macklin's heart bled for Cap'n Ira and Prudence!

If she must go and they took this other girl in her place, would they be happy? And they had been happy during these last months! Would they not miss her if she left them to the mercy of this new claimant? She could not imagine the coarse, sharp-spoken Ida May giving the old people the attentions they needed and taking upon her thin shoulders the responsibilities Sheila had assumed.

And Sheila loved Cap'n Ira and Prudence. She loved them as though they were her very own! Not since her father had died had the girl been so fond of anybody—except Tunis, of course. And what would Tunis say when he came?

What would he expect her to do? To admit the truth of Ida May's claim and give up without a battle? If she did this, she would expose him as well as herself to infamy. It was a situation that would have appalled a person of much stronger character than Sheila Macklin, and she was no weakling.

No! She could not give up—not without a struggle. As she had first decided, she must confront the new girl boldly and deny, if she could, any claim Ida May Bostwick put forward. She must do this for Tunis as much as for herself.

She arose determinedly. With this thought, strength surged back into her limbs as well as into her mind. For a time she had been weak, undecided. Once more she gathered her energies to oppose the sea of adversity which threatened to overwhelm her.

She crossed the hall and opened the



sitting room door. Cap'n Ira sat in his usual chair, leaning forward, with his hands clasped over the knob of his cane. Prudence, with a wondering look on her face, sat beside him, and just as far from the new girl as the length of the room would allow. The latter had been speaking with her usual vehemence, and she did not even glance at Sheila when the latter came quietly into the room.

"Oh, Ida May!" gasped Prudence, and almost ran to her. "Do you know what she is saying? I never heard of such a thing!"

"I tell you she *ain't* Ida Bostwick," cried the other. "Don't you dare call her that. I'll——"

"Hoity-toity, young woman! Avast there!" said the captain gruffly. "We won't get to the rights of this by quarreling. Wait!"

He looked at Sheila, and his weather-hued countenance was as kindly of expression as usual.

"You know what this young woman says?" he asked.

Sheila nodded, but she held Prudence closely. The old woman was sobbing.

"This won't do, you know," said Cap'n Ira. "I swan! It beats my time. I expect you've got friends somewhere, young woman, and you ought to be given into their charge. I'm real sorry for you, but what you say don't sound sensible. Ain't you made a mistake? I cal'late you heard about us and Ida May——"

"I tell you," cried the girl, starting to her feet again, the brown eyes flashing spitefully, "that that thing there is an impostor. She's got my place. She's took my name. Why, I'll—I'll have her arrested. Ain't there no police in this awful place?"

"There's a constable all right," said Cap'n Ira calmly. "But I wouldn't want to call him in. Not just now, anyway. It looks to me you wanted a doctor more than you wanted a constable."

"You think I'm crazy!" gasped Ida May.

"Well, it looks as though you was a leetle off your course," the old man told her calmly. "You don't talk with sense, to say the least. Making the claim you do would make most anybody think you was a little flighty. Yes, a little flighty, to say the least." And he wagged his head.

"Look here," he pursued soothingly. "Have you been sick, perhaps? You ain't quite yourself, be ye? I knowed a feller once that thought he was the angel Gabriel and went around with a tin fish horn, tooting it at all hours of the day and night. But no graves opened for him and nobody was resurrected. They finally put him in the booby hatch, poor feller."

"I'm your niece, I tell you," interrupted Ida May, pointing at Prudence, who shrank from her immediately in undeniable fear. "My mother was Sarah Honey before she was married. I guess there must be enough people in this Big Wreck Cove place who knew her and remember her to prove who I am."

"I wouldn't try to do that," said Cap'n Ira thoughtfully. "Telling such a thing as this among the neighbors would be the surest way of getting into trouble. That's right. If Prudence—Mrs. Ball—don't know ye, do you think strangers would be likely to back you up? Don't you think it would be better to sit down quietly and rest a while? Maybe you'd better stay with us overnight."

"Oh, Ira!" gasped his wife. "I wouldn't scurce dare have her stay. She—she's out of her head. She might do something."

"I'll do something fast enough!" cried Ida May, stamping her foot. "I'll do something to that hussy!"

"You hear her, Ira?" murmured Prudence, trying to draw Sheila away from the enraged girl.



"Threatening damage never broke no bones yet," said the captain calmly.

"I'll do *her* some damage," declared Ida May bitterly. "If none of you won't listen to me, I'll find somebody that will. I'll——"

She halted suddenly in her wild and angry speech. Her face changed as if by magic. The flush died in it and the expression of her sparkling eyes became subdued. A simpering look overspread Ida May Bostwick's countenance that warned the other girl, at least, that another person had entered the house.

Before Sheila could turn to look toward the kitchen door, Ida May cried:

"Oh, Cousin Tunis! If you ain't my cousin exactly, I guess you are pretty near. And ain't I glad you've come! Do you know what this awful girl is saying—what she is doing here?—And these old fools won't believe me! I never heard of such a thing. Just you tell them who I am, and I guess they'll make her pack up and get out in a hurry."

In the doorway stood the captain of the *Seamew*. The two old people welcomed his appearance with a satisfaction that could not be mistaken.

"I swan, Tunis, you come at a mighty handy time," declared Cap'n Ira.

"Oh, Tunis! Take that girl away," cried Prudence faintly, pointing at Ida May.

The most difficult thing Sheila Macklin had ever done in all her life was what she did now. To act and speak a deliberate falsehood before Tunis Latham!

She disengaged herself from Prudence, and before the simpering Ida May could speak again, Sheila ran to him. In her face was, for the moment, all the fear and horror of the situation which she felt. It was a warning to him, and he was acute enough to understand it even before she spoke.

"Oh, Tunis! This girl must be beside herself. She says her name is Ida

May Bostwick and that she is Mrs. Ball's niece."

Involuntarily Tunis had stretched forth his hands to welcome Sheila. He drew her closer without giving the Balls any attention whatsoever. One flashing glance he gave to the girl he held so gently—a look which was both a promise and a reassurance. Then he gazed over her head at the smirking Ida May.

"What's the matter here?" he demanded.

"Matter enough," said Cap'n Ira, not without marking, however, the attitude of the two young people he and Prudence loved. He even nudged his wife, who now stood close beside him. "Matter enough. That gal there, Tunis, seems to have lost her top-hammer. Leastways, some of it is mighty loose."

"Tunis Latham!" gasped the new claimant. "You know who I am. Tell that girl——"

She halted again, realizing the young man's expression of countenance and his attitude with the other girl. She was quick enough of comprehension to see that this other girl had the advantage of her with the captain of the *Seamew* as well as with her relatives.

In Ida May's own artful mind she had decided that a smart girl could easily "twist that fellow around her finger." This girl who had usurped her name and identity had already succeeded in doing just that! The girl from Hoskin & Marl's halted, the wrathful flush came back into her pretty, insipid face, and she almost screamed:

"What's got into you folks? Are you all crazy? Why, that fellow knows who I am well enough! I bet he brought that girl here himself and palmed her off on you." She turned to blaze at Cap'n Ira and Prudence. "He picked her up somewhere—some low creature! But I'll show them both up; that's what I'll do. I'll make them both sorry for

cheating me. I guess you folks have got a heap of money, and that fellow and that girl are trying to get it all. But they won't. I'll have my rights or——"

"Belay that!" exclaimed Cap'n Ira suddenly. "We won't listen to no more such talk. Whatever we have got—Prudence and me—and whoever you be, young woman, I eal'late we'll do about as we please with it. I think you have broke loose from them that had you in charge. And they ought to be hunting for you. Leastways, I guess you'd better be sent back to 'em."

"I'm her niece, I tell you!" reiterated Ida May, pointing at Prudence, who shrank again from the vehement girl.

Then she whirled on Tunis. She clasped her hands. Into her rage was distilled some fear because of Cap'n Ira's grim words.

"You got to help me," she said to the younger man. "You know who I am, and you daren't deny it!"

No man can pace the quarter-deck—even of a packet of no greater importance than the *Seamew*—without having developed the sterner side of his character. And Tunis Latham came of a long line of shipmasters who had handled all sorts and conditions of men. If a skipper does not command the respect of his crew, he'll not get far!

The grim mask that had settled upon the countenance of the captain of the *Seamew* might have stayed the tongue of a more courageous person than Ida May Bostwick. His severe look and manner appalled her.

"See here, young woman, I don't like your tone; nor do I understand what you mean. Who do you say this is, Ida May?" he added more gently, looking down into Sheila's face again.

"She——"

"I'm Ida May Bostwick. You know I am!" wailed the visitor. "Why—why, you must remember me, Tunis Latham.

Don't you call her by my name. I won't stand it."

"Mad as a hatter! Mad as a hatter!" muttered Cap'n Ira to Prudence.

"There's something the matter with her, is there?" proceeded Tunis thoughtfully, eying the claimant as though she was indeed an utter stranger. "How did she get here? What does she want?"

"She wants a strait-jacket, I cal'late," said Cap'n Ira. "I don't know what is best to do about her. Prudence says she won't have her in the house overnight. 'Twould be too bad to have to put her in the town lockup."

"You dare to!" shrieked Ida May, with courage born of desperation.

Tunis put Sheila tenderly aside. He crossed the room to the other girl. He showed no manner of sympathy for her, but he spoke quietly.

"This won't do, you know. Mr. and Mrs. Ball don't want you here. You have no claim on them—none at all. Even if you chanced to be a relation, they have not got to take you in if they don't want to."

"They've taken that other girl in!" cried Ida May wildly.

"That is their business. They want her. They don't want you. You have no more standing here than you would have if you went into the house of the governor of the State and demanded recognition there."

"What a wicked man you are!" gasped Ida May. "And—and I thought you was a simp!"

Tunis did not even change color. He addressed her as though he believed she was not right in her mind. Sheila watched him, not now in fear, but in wonder. She had thought she must battle with this girl for Tunis' name and reputation. But the captain of the *Seamew* had seized the reins of affairs himself and was likely to do much better in the emergency than Sheila could ever dream of doing.

"Come, now," said Tunis Latham calmly. "I do not know where you belong or where you came from last. But you cannot stay here. Cap'n Ira and Aunt Prue do not want you. If you have any friends near——"

"I've got friends all right! You'll find out that I've got 'em!" gasped the girl threateningly.

"You know anybody in Big Wreck Cove?"

"No, I don't. I've just come here. But I mean to stay here till I get my rights. I'll show you all!"

"You can't show us anything to-night," interposed Tunis firmly. "Whatever you mean to try to do cannot be done right now, you know. You will have to sleep somewhere, and I shall have to do one of two things—no, one of three things."

She looked at him wonderingly, but she was listening.

"I will take you back to the port. You cannot go home—wherever you live—to-night. In the morning you can go over with Ben Craddock on the stage to Paulmouth."

"I won't!" The girl's determination was roused. There was a stubborn streak in her character that would make her a bitter antagonist. Tunis, as well as Sheila, realized this.

"All right," said the captain of the *Seamew* calmly. "Then I'll get you a place to stay down in the port. Or I shall have to see the justice of the peace and have you committed for your own safety."

"You don't dare!" cried Ida May again.

"You tempt me too far, young woman," he said sternly, "and you'll find just how much I dare. Will you come along with me now and behave yourself?"

"That's the ticket, Tunis," muttered Cap'n Ira. "Put her where she belongs."

"So my own folks turn me out, do

they?" cried Ida May, hatefully staring at the two old people. "If anybody is crazy it is those two," and she pointed to the Balls. "Take in a drab like that girl and throw me out. Why, I believe I've seen her before. Somehow, she looks familiar," she added, her sharp gaze fixed on Sheila again. "Well, wherever it was, she was up to no good, I'll be bound."

"Are you coming with me willingly, and now?" put in Tunis more harshly. "You are taking a chance, young woman, in talking this way."

"Oh, she's got you going. That's plain to be seen! I thought you was a nice fellow. But I guess you're like other sailors. I always heard they was a bad lot—running after women——"

"Will you come without any more words?" interrupted Tunis grimly.

"I'll have to go back to the town, I suppose. But remember! This ain't the end of this," she weakly blustered.

"This your bag?" said Tunis calmly, picking up Ida May's satchel. "All right. We'll go."

He did not attempt to look at Sheila again, nor at Cap'n Ira and Prudence. He walked behind Ida May, but rather hustled her out of the door. She might have cast back some final defiance, but he gave her no chance.

It was almost twilight when they went out at the kitchen door. They left the trio in the sitting room speechless for the moment. But Sheila Macklin's speechlessness arose through different thoughts from those of the Balls.

The girl left behind realized that this almost unexpected outcome was but the momentary triumph of falsehood.

## CHAPTER XXII.

"Ida May, you'd better sit down. You look like you'd had a stroke," declared the captain.

"Why wouldn't she, the dear child?" cried Prudence. "What do you sup-

pose is the matter with that girl? Is she crazy?"

"Crazy ain't no name for it," her husband rejoined. "Her top-hamper is all askew, I callate. I never see the beat."

But just now Sheila could not endure any discussion of the strange girl. She arose as quickly as she had seated herself.

"I must fix supper," she said briskly. "You sit still, Aunt Prudence. You're flustered, I can see. There is nothing for you to do."

"That's right," put in Cap'n Ira. "Get a bite ready against Tunis comes back. He'll want something fillin' after handling that crazy gal."

He winked at Prudence and nudged her. The outstanding incident for the old man was the unmistakable signs Tunis and Sheila had given that they were in love with each other.

"What did I tell ye when that gal first come here?" whispered Cap'n Ira hoarsely, when the girl had left the room. "I knowed that the hull generation here on the Cape hadn't been struck blind, not by a jugful! And it's evident to my mind, Prudence, that Tunis Latham has had his eyes pretty wide open from the first."

"Oh! I hope—it can't be that Ida May would leave us," murmured Prudence. "I don't mean to be selfish."

"Looks like we could get another gal easy enough if we wanted her," remarked the old man, with some bitterness. "I swan, Prue! S'pose Ida May had turned out to be the sort of a gal that flyaway critter is? We are blessed; we certainly are."

Sheila did not wish to hear the two old people talk about the real Ida May Bostwick. When Tunis took the girl away it was an enormous relief. Of that she was quite sure. The malevolent attitude of the frustrated Ida May was sufficient to frighten anybody.

Sheila was positive enough that, as

Ida May had promised, the matter was not ended. That venomous girl would not be content to leave Big Wreck Cove without making a further attempt—perhaps many—to establish herself in her right identity and in what she considered her rightful place with the Balls.

Supper was late that evening. They were only just seated at the table when Tunis returned.

"Come on, boy," said Cap'n Ira. "There's a place set for you. Tell us what you did with that crazy girl."

Sheila was busy between the stove and the table and did not come to the side of the captain of the *Seamew* as he took the chair indicated. He was not smiling as usual, but neither did he seem alarmed. He replied to the questions of the old people with tranquillity.

"I did not advise her to go to the Burchell House," Tunis said. "You know what a talker Sally Burchell is. I remembered that Mrs. Pauling took boarders in the summer, and I went to her with that girl."

"You mean Zeb's mother?" asked Prudence. "Well, she'll take care of her, I guess. And Zeb is strong and willing. If she gets crazy in the night, they ought to be able to hold her."

A faint smile flickered for a moment about Tunis Latham's stern lips.

"I don't guess she will act up so very bad with strangers."

"I swan! We was strangers enough to her, it would seem," exclaimed Cap'n Ira.

"But she seems to consider that you ought not to be," Tunis pointed out.

"Never heard of such a thing!" muttered the old man.

"I would have been glad to get her out of town this very night," Tunis observed quietly. "But it could not be done. She is convinced that she has what she calls 'rights,' and she proposes to remain and fight for them."

"I swan!"

"You will have to be firm with her. I explained to Zeb's mother what we thought was the matter with her. And I'll try to find her friends. She says she comes from Boston."

"Goodness gracious gallop!" exclaimed the old woman, more angry than frightened now. "She certainly can't stay here and tell those awful things she was saying about Ida May."

"I don't really see how we are going to stop her, right at first," Tunis rejoined. "Of course, if she continues to come up here and bother you, you can have her arrested."

"Oh!" gasped Sheila.

"Now, gal," said Cap'n Ira firmly, "don't you let your tender heart deceive you. That crazy critter ain't worth worrying about. She shan't be hurt. But I won't have her coming round here frightening you and Prudence. No, sir."

"Quite right," said Tunis, agreeing.

"Oh, Tunis!" murmured the girl.

"But she will make talk. No doubt she will make talk," said Prudence in a worried tone. "We ought to stop her, somehow, from telling such things about our Ida May."

"Does she want money?" asked Cap'n Ira gruffly. "She talked as though she did."

"I think to offer her money would be the very worst possible way of shutting her up," said Tunis. "She wants to come here and live and be accepted as your niece."

"I never did!" gasped Prudence.

"She says nothing else will suit her. She seems to think she can prove what she had claimed. I think the best thing to do is to let her try it."

Sheila could not eat. She merely stared from one to the other of the three and listened to the discussion. In no way could she see a shadow of escape from ultimate disaster; yet she saw that Tunis was determined to fight it out on this line, to deny the stran-

ger's claim and hold to what had already been gained for the girl in possession!

"Well," Prudence said, with a sigh, "I can see plainly it is going to stir up a puddle of muddy water. Unless she says or does something that makes the authorities take her and put her away, there will be them that will believe her—or half believe her."

"Let 'em talk," growled Cap'n Ira.

"'Twon't be the first time Big Wreck Cove folks got a mouthful to chew."

"But it will hurt Ida May," said Prudence, her voice trembling, as she squeezed the girl's hand.

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me," began Cap'n Ira. Then he broke off in anger when he saw the girl's face, and exclaimed: "But, I swan! They'll keep you dodging, and that's a fact! Ought to be some way of shutting her up, Tunis."

"I don't know how that is going to be done. Not just at first, anyway. Perhaps something will turn up. And, anyway, she hasn't begun to talk yet."

"It's like being tied down to one o' them railroad tracks and waiting for the fast express to come along and crunch ye," grumbled the old man. "I know how Ida May feels. But you keep a stiff upper lip, my gal. You've got plenty of friends that won't listen to any such crazy notions as that other gal's got in her noddle."

In this manner the old folks comforted themselves in part. But nothing that was said could comfort Sheila. Tunis smoked a pipe with Cap'n Ira after supper, while the girl cleared off the table and washed and dried the dishes. Then he got her outside just after he had bidden Cap'n Ira and Prudence good night.

They walked away silently from the kitchen door into the deep murk of a starless night. The moaning of a rising sea upon the outer reefs was the



requiem of Sheila's hopes. One thing, she saw clearly, she must do. If she remained and fought for her place with the Balls, she must stand alone. Whether or not she held her place, she must not allow Tunis to be linked with her in this situation. As she slipped deeper and deeper into the morass, she could not cling to him and drag him as well into infamy and disgrace.

Away from the house, fully out of earshot from the kitchen, she halted. Tunis had taken her hand in his warm, encouraging grasp. She let it remain, but she did not return his pressure.

"Dear, this is dreadful," he whispered, "I know. But leave it to me. I'll find some way out."

"There is no way out, Tunis," she said confidently.

"Cat's-foot! Don't say that," he cried in exasperation. "There is always a way out of every jam."

"This girl will do one of two things," said Sheila firmly. "Either she will prove her claim, or she will give it up and go back to Boston. You know that."

"She'll fight hard, I guess," he admitted.

"Either way, Tunis," the girl pursued, "there is bound to be much doubt cast upon my character—upon *me*. If the truth becomes known, I am utterly lost. If it is hushed up, I must go on living a lie—if I stay here."

"Don't talk that way!" he exclaimed gruffly. "Of course you'll stay here. If not with the Balls, then with me."

"Stop!" she begged him. "Wait! I am going to state the matter plainly as it is. We can no longer dodge it. This is the *truth* which we have been trying to ignore. I have not been foolish only; I have been wicked. And my greatest sin was in allowing you to link yourself with me so closely."

"What do you mean?" he gasped.

"Just what I say. It was wrong for me to allow you to be friendly with me  
to—Smi.

before the Balls and other people. I should not have gone to your house last Sunday. I should not have allowed you to introduce me to your Aunt Lucretia."

"Ida May!"

"That is not my name," she whispered. "Let there be no further mockery between you and me, Tunis. I have been wicked; *we* have been wicked. We must pay for what we have done. There is no escaping that. I must not keep you as my lover, Tunis. I was wrong—oh! so wrong—last Sunday. Reckless, wicked, drifting with a current, I scarcely knew where."

"My dear girl——"

"Now I see the rocks ahead, Tunis. I can shut my eyes to them no longer. Disaster is at hand. You shall not be overwhelmed, as I may be overwhelmed at any time. I will not have your ruin on my conscience!"

"My ruin?" he repeated. "Ridiculous! My dear girl, you are talking like a mad woman. You cannot snap the tie that binds us. You cannot shoulder all the responsibility for this situation. The sin is as much mine as yours, if it is a sin. I'm in it as deep as you are."

"You must not be," she cried. "You can escape. You *shall* escape."

"Suppose I refuse to do so?" And he said it confidently.

"Tunis, I have thought of a way out for you," she cried suddenly.

"I don't want to hear it."

"But you must hear it!"

"I will not accept it."

"You cannot help yourself," she told him firmly. "Oh, I know what I am about! You may be angry; you will perhaps be laughed at a bit. But to be laughed at is better than to be scorned."

"What under the sun do you mean, girl?" he exclaimed, both startled and horrified by her determined words.

"Do you think I would desert you in



the middle of the current and swim ashore?"

"But I will desert you. I am determined to desert you. I refuse to cling to you, a millstone about your neck to drag you down. Ah, Tunis, whether or not that girl makes her claim good, what you and I had hoped for cannot be! An explanation must be made of your part in this frightful affair. That, in itself, must separate you and me."

"What explanation? There is no such explanation that can be made. I glory in the fact that we are together in this, Sheila, and whatever comes of it, we stand or fall together!"

"Ah, Tunis, you *are* a man! I knew that before. But nothing you can say will bend my determination. I withdraw all I said to you Sunday and on Monday morning before you went away. I positively withdraw all I promised you. It cannot be, Tunis. We cannot look forward to any happiness when we began so unwisely."

"Unwisely? What do you mean?" demanded the captain of the *Seamew*. "Chance threw us together. *Providence*, I tell you! I needed you fully as much as you needed me. And surely these poor old folks needed you, Sheila. Consider what you have been to them."

"It makes no difference in our association, Tunis," she said, shaking her head.

"Why, that night we talked upon that bench on Boston Common, had I dared propose such a thing, I would have said: 'Come and marry me now.' I would, indeed, Sheila."

The girl clenched her hands and drew in a breath. She raised her face to his, and in the darkness Tunis Latham saw it shine with a light from within. A great and desperate longing filled her voice when she cried:

"Oh, why didn't you do just that, Tunis Latham? I would have said 'yes.' And all this—*this*—need not have been."

Swiftly she caught him around the neck, pressed her lips fiercely to his, while the tears rained down her face, wetting his face as well. Then she was gone. He heard her sobbing wildly in the dark. He was alone.

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

Cap'n Ira and Prudence did not see Sheila again that evening, for she slipped in by the kitchen door after they had gone into the sitting room and went up to her own chamber. They heard her mount the stairs and marked the tread of her light feet overhead.

The girl was not thinking of the old people just then. Their need entered into her determination to remain if she could. But this night was one time when Sheila Macklin thought almost altogether of herself and her personal difficulties.

Her present and acknowledged love for the young captain of the *Seamew* had been of no mushroom growth. She might not say, as Tunis did, that she had fallen in love at first sight. But very soon after meeting the young ship-master from Big Wreck Cove she had appreciated his full value and realized that he was far and away the best man she had ever met.

Indeed, in that moment when Tunis Latham had caught Sheila in his arms as she had slipped in front of the restaurant on Scollay Square, the girl's mind had been stabbed through by such a poignant feeling, such a desire to know more about him, that she was actually frightened by the strength of this concern.

But she was now determined that Tunis must and should be saved from the results of his own folly in being associated with her in any way.

She knelt before her north window with the frosty air breathing in like a balm upon her fevered body, and strained her eyes for a glimpse of the

light that always burned in Tunis' window when he was at home. It was a long time before she saw it. For Tunis Latham had walked about the fields a long time after she left him, and it was late when he finally entered the big brown house behind the cedars.

Aunt Lucretia, who had been expecting him, after she had seen the *Seamew* heading for the cove that afternoon, was still sitting in the kitchen when her nephew entered. Composed as the man's features were, there was still an expression upon them which startled the woman. It brought her out of her chair, even if it did not bring an audible question to her lips.

"I was delayed, Aunt 'Cretia," he said. "No; nothing new about the *Seamew* or about business. It's—there's trouble up to the Balls'."

He knew her first thought would be for the health of the two old people, and he had to explain a little more.

"They are all right—Cap'n Ira and Aunt Prue. It's about Sh—Ida May."

"Tunis! Nothing has happened to the girl? She isn't sick?"

He must take Aunt Lucretia into his confidence—at least, to some extent. Just how much could he tell her? How much dared he tell her?

From somebody, he felt sure, she would hear about this other girl who had appeared to claim kinship with the Balls and demand that Sheila give over to her the place she had with Cap'n Ira and Prudence. For Ida May Bostwick was going to talk. Tunis knew that well enough. Although he had warned her sternly that evening against talking, he knew well enough that after the girl had recovered from her first fright she would spit out the venomous tale that she had already concocted in her mind about Sheila and himself.

He could not bring himself to confess to Aunt Lucretia all the truth about his first meeting and subsequent asso-

ciation with Sheila. Indeed, he hoped he would never be obliged to tell it.

But he must tell Aunt Lucretia nothing but the truth. He did this by beginning at the coming of the real Ida May Bostwick to the Ball house that afternoon and her claim to Sheila's place with the family. As he told the story, Aunt Lucretia gazed upon him so fixedly, so intently, that the captain of the *Seamew* was disturbed. He could not understand her expression.

Perhaps he told the story haltingly of how Ida May had been turned out and he had taken her back to the port and housed her with Mrs. Pauling. He made few comments, however; he left Aunt Lucretia to draw her own conclusions. It was not until he had quite finished that she spoke again.

"That crazy girl, is she——"

"I don't know that she's crazy," said Tunis gruffly.

"It would seem so. Does she look like Ida May?"

Tunis started. The question seemed to probe into a matter that he had not before considered. But he shook his head negatively.

"Nothing like her," he said. "Reddish hair. Brown eyes—or kind of brown. When she's maddest there are green lights in 'em. Not nice eyes at all."

Aunt Lucretia nodded and said no more upon that point. What her question had dealt with in her own mind, Tunis could not guess. She watched his face, now pale and sadly drawn. Then she placed a firm hand upon his arm to arouse his attention.

"Tunis! This—this girl at Cap'n Ira's is something to you?"

"My God! Aunt 'Cretia, she's *everything* to me," he groaned, his reticence breaking down.

"Is she a good girl, Tunis?"

"As good as gold. On my honor, there was never a nobler or better girl. I—I love her!" The words burst from

him now in a great gush of emotion. These Lathams, when they did break up, often ran over. "I can't tell you the hold she has on me. If I lose her through this or any other cause, I'm done for!

"She thinks she isn't good enough for me. She is afraid of this girl who claims her place. She fears that I am going to be looked down on if I have anything more to do with her. And I tell you, if she was not the girl I know her to be, I would still cling to her. I must have her. I tell you, I must!"

Tears came to his eyes. His voice, hoarse and broken, carried to the woman's heart the knowledge that the one and overpowering passion of the man's life was rampant within him. What or whoever the girl at the Ball homestead might be, Tunis Latham was bound to her by ties which could not be broken.

She did the thing most generous; quite in accordance with her unselfish disposition. She stepped nearer to her nephew and put her arms about his neck. She kissed him. She gave no further evidence of doubt or disapproval. Indeed, when he left her to go to his room, he was assured that, however the world might look upon him, Aunt Lucretia was his supporter and would be that under any and all circumstances.

The girl in the Ball house saw the glimmer of his lamp that night for a very few minutes. There was a day's work before him, and Tunis Latham, like other hard-working men, must have his sleep. He was probably in dreams before he had lain upon his bed ten minutes.

Sheila kept the night watches alone. She went to bed, but the lids of her eyes could not close. Sleep was as far from her as heaven itself. She went over the entire happenings of the previous afternoon and evening with care, giving to each incident its rightful importance, judging the weight of each

word said, each look granted her. Did the Balls suspect her in the least? Had the story Ida May Bostwick told made any real impression upon their minds?

No! She finally told herself that thus far she was secure. Ida May must bring something besides assertion to influence the minds of the two old people. And if she had had documentary proof in her possession yesterday, the new claimant would have shown it.

Nobody carries about with him birth certificate or memoranda of identification and relationship. If Ida May had been warned of what she was to meet at the old house on Wreckers' Head, without doubt she would have tried to equip herself in some such way for the interview.

It might be very difficult for the girl to obtain any evidence that would assure the Balls of her actual relationship to them. Sheila had foreseen this possibility from the first. She was still quite determined to hold on, to make the other girl do all the talking and all the proving. She herself would rest upon the foundation of her establishment in the place Ida May Bostwick claimed.

The latter certainly could not know Sheila's true history. Sheila was as much a stranger to Ida May as she had been to the Balls when Tunis had brought her to Wreckers' Head.

And then, suddenly, a thought seared through the girl's mind. Something that Ida May Bostwick had said just before Tunis hurried her out of the house!

"I believe I've seen her before. Somehow, she looks familiar."

These two sentences, spoken in Ida May's sneering way, had made little impression on the excited Sheila at the time they were spoken. But now they made the girl's heart beat wildly.

Suppose it were true! Suppose Ida

May should really remember who Sheila was? It was not impossible that the girl from the lace counter of Hoskin & Marl's knew of Sheila's disgrace. The latter never remembered having seen Ida May before she agreed to come to Big Wreck Cove. Ida May's words, nevertheless, might not be altogether an empty threat!

Sleep was not within her reach. The long hours of the night dragged past. Dimly dawn crept along the dark line of the horizon, circling all her world as far as Sheila could see it from her bed. But it was still dark below her north window when she caught the sound of a familiar step, the crunch of gravel under Tunis' boot.

She lay shaking for a moment, holding her breath. She heard the tiny pebbles rattle upon the window sill. For the first time she had not been downstairs to greet Tunis on his way to the port. Could she let him go now without a word?

But she must! She must be firm.

Nevertheless, she slipped softly out of bed. The pebbles rattled again. She caught up a dark veil from her bureau and wrapped it about her face. She crept to the north window. The veil would mask her face so that he could not distinguish it in the shadow.

But she could look down upon him. She saw him standing there so firmly—so determinedly. His was no nature to give over easily anything he had set his heart on. All the more reason why Sheila should not appear to weaken.

She crouched there breathlessly as he tossed up more pebbles. Then she heard him sigh. Then he turned slowly away, and his feet dragged off along the path, and he went out of sight.

The girl crept back into bed. She hid her face in the pillow and dry sobs racked her frame. This was the hardest of all the hard things she had to do. She had wounded Tunis to the heart!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Tunis Latham went down the track toward the port as the dull dawn glimmered behind him in a frame of mind so dismal and despairing that more than Sheila Macklin would have pitied the captain of the *Seamew*. Against the tide of emotions which now surged in his heart he scarcely had the energy to battle.

Never had he felt less like approaching his usual tasks as commander and owner of the schooner and facing the trials he knew would meet him upon this coming trip to Boston. Freight was waiting upon Luiz Wharf, and he would be able to pick up the remainder of his cargo at Hollis, which, with the wind as it was now, he could reach that afternoon by four o'clock. Given good luck, he would warp into the T-wharf next day before nightfall.

The uncertain point which troubled him most was the matter of the crew of the *Seamew*. The Portygees remaining with him—even Johnny Lark, the cook—had been in a most unhappy temper all the way back from Boston on the last trip. Tunis could depend upon Mate Chapin, Boatswain Newbegin, and 'Rion Latham himself to stick by the schooner. For, in spite of his quarreling and long tongue about a hoodoo, Tunis thought that his cousin was a man above any real fear of the very superstitions he talked about.

But four men could not safely work the schooner to Boston, nor in season to keep his contract with the consignees of freight which the *Seamew* carried. Troubled as he had been at Boston, and delayed, Tunis wished now that he had remained there even longer while he made search for and engaged a proper crew for the schooner. He had better, perhaps, have paid the fare of the Portygees back to Big Wreck Cove and so saved quarreling with them.

When he had been about to leave the

schooner the afternoon before, the foolish fellows had sent a spokesman to him asking if he was sure the *Seamew* was not the old *Marlin B.*, the Salem fishing craft which had been acclaimed "the murder ship" from the Banks to the Cape by all coasting seamen several years before. To answer this question rasped the pride of the owner of the *Seamew*. For a seaman to ask a question of one of the officers—a question of such a nature—was flaunting authority in any case.

Although Captain Latham considered the question ridiculous and utterly unworthy of a serious answer, he had replied to it.

He had told the sailor that to the best of his knowledge and belief the old *Marlin B.* was several thousand miles away from the Cape at that time, and that the *Seamew* was herself and no other. In any case, he had said he had no personal fear of sailing in the schooner as long as he could keep a decent crew of seamen aboard her, but that he would stand for no more foolishness from his present crew.

Tunis had spoken quite boldly. But, to tell the truth, he did not know where or how he was to sign another crew and a cook if the Portygees deserted the schooner. Not at Big Wreck Cove. He had heard too many whispers about the curse upon his schooner from people of all classes in the port. Even Joshua Jones, who was supposed to be a pretty hard-headed merchant, had been influenced by the story. Rion Latham had first told about the *Seamew*. He and his father had hesitated to give Tunis an order for another lot of freight now waiting on the dock at Boston. They wanted to be sure that the schooner was not going to sail from the latter port undermanned. Whether or not the Joneses believed in the hoodoo, they did know that if the *Seamew* sailed without a proper crew their insurance on the freight would be invalid.

So the farther Tunis walked down toward the wharves, the more these thoughts assailed and overcame his mind, to the exclusion even of the tragic happenings back there on the Head the night before. He could not consider Ida May Bostwick—not even Sheila—now. The schooner, with her affairs, was a harsh mistress. His all was invested in the *Seamew*, and business had not been so good thus far that he could withdraw with a profit. Far from that! There were financial reefs and shoals on either hand, and that fact the young skipper knew right well.

As he drew near to Portygee Town, he glanced toward the open door of Pareta's cottage and saw the girl, Eunez, seated upon the step. She did not come out to meet him as had been her wont, but she hailed him as he approached—though in a sharper tone than usual.

"So Captain Tunis Latham has still another girl? He is a lion with the ladies, it is plain to be seen. Ah!"

"You don't mind, do you, Eunez?" replied the young man, trying to assume his usual careless manner of speech. "You have the reputation for being pretty popular with the fellows yourself."

"Ah!" she said again, tossing her head. "Who is this new girl I see you walk with last evening, Tunis?"

"She is a stranger in Big Wreck Cove," was his noncommittal reply.

"So I see. They come and go for you, Tunis Latham. You are the fickle man, eh?"

"Tut, tut, Eunez!" he laughed. "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. How about yourself? Didn't I see you going to church with Johnny Lark last Sunday? And then, in the afternoon, you had another cavalier along the beaches. Oh, I saw you!"

The color flashed into her dark cheek, and her black eyes reflected some unexplained anger. • Beside her, leaning



against the house wall, was the handle end of a broken oar. Tunis chanced to mark that there was a streak of dull blue paint on it.

"You have sharp eyes, Tunis Latham," hissed the girl. "Not all of the Lathams are too proud to walk with Eunez Pareta—or too proud to think of her. But *you*—bah!"

She got up suddenly, turned her back upon him, and entered the cottage. Tunis walked on, just a little puzzled.

Horry Newbegin sat on the rail of the schooner smoking, and evidently looking anxiously for the appearance of the skipper. There was no smoke rising from the galley chimney.

"What's the matter with cooky?" demanded Tunis briskly.

"The dratted Portygee's gone off to Paulmouth. He left word he couldn't sail with us this trip."

"Then he'll never sail on the *Scamew* again," declared the skipper grimly.

"And *that* won't bother him none," said the boatswain gloomily.

"I'll get breakfast for all hands," said Tunis. "I'm not above that. Where are the hands?"

"As far as I know, Cap'n Tunis, they are where Johnny Lark is. Haven't shown up, and don't mean to," said Horry doggedly.

Tunis Latham cursed his delinquent crew soundly. The rage which flamed into his eyes, added to the pallor of his face, made an ugly mask indeed. It was not often that he gave way to such an outburst, but Horry had seen the same deadly anger displayed on occasion by Captain Randall Latham.

"Where's Mr. Chapin?"

"He was here before you, Cap'n Tunis. He's gone up to town to see if he can drum up some hands."

"Where's 'Rion?"

"He says he'll be here by the time you get ready to wheel the stuff aboard." And the old man pointed with his pipe-stem toward the open door of the shed.

"Ha!" ejaculated Tunis. "Feared I'd set him to work, eh? Well, they're all dogs together—the whole litter of 'em. I'll make the coffee. Tell me when Mr. Chapin comes. I suppose we can hire enough hands to get the freight aboard."

"But we can't work the schooner with three men, Cap'n Tunis; nor yet with four."

"Don't I know that? I'll get a crew if I have to shanghai them," promised Tunis grimly.

Mason Chapin came along with half a dozen fellows after a while. One was a negro who could cook. But there was no breakfast worthy of the name served aboard the *Scamew* that morning. They were late already in getting to work.

It was the middle of the forenoon before the schooner left port. There was a crew, such as it was. But Mason Chapin had been obliged to promise them extra pay to get them aboard the schooner at all.

When 'Rion Latham slipped aboard finally, half the loading of the cargo had been accomplished. Tunis himself was keeping tally. The skipper beckoned his cousin to him.

"'Rion," he said, "you certainly are about as useless a fellow as I ever had anything to do with. These Portygees who have left me in the lurch have some excuse for their actions. They are ignorant and superstitious. You know damned well that the stuff you have been repeating about the schooner being cursed is nothing but lies and old-women's gossip! You've done it to make trouble. I'd ought to have booted you overboard at the start."

"Aw—you—"

"Close your hatch!" ejaculated Tunis. "And keep it closed. I'm talking, and I won't take any of your slack in return. I am not married to you, thanks be! I think you've got pretty near enough of me, and I'm sure I have of you, 'Rion. I give you warning—"



"Oh! You do?" snarled 'Rion, his ugly face aflame.

"Yes. I give you *fair* warning. When the *Seamew* gets back here to Big Wreck Cove again, you're through! You can take your dunnage ashore now if you like, but you go without pay if you do. Or you can do your work properly on this trip and return. *Then* you get through. Take your choice."

He expected 'Rion would leave the *Seamew* then and there. Tunis half hoped, indeed, that he would do so. But to his surprise, Orion suddenly snatched the book and pencil out of the skipper's hand and, growling that "he'd stay the voyage out," shuffled away to the rail and began taking tally of the barrels and cases being hauled aboard.

Working smartly, the new crew got the *Seamew* under sail and out of the cove a little after noon. The wind held in a favorable quarter, and they reached Hollis betimes. There they finished the schooner's loading, and about dark went out to sea on a long tack and got plenty of sea room before they made the short leg of it.

Supper was the first good meal they had had aboard that day. After everything was cleaned up, the black cook joined the crew forward. In whispers the men talked over both the skipper and his schooner. The story of the curse was known to everybody in Big Wreck Cove by this time, and none of these new men was ignorant of it. They had, however, merely used it as a means of getting more pay than ordinary seamen were getting in such vessels.

"'Tain't nothing as I can see," one of the older men said, "that is likely to hurt us. It's a curse on the schooner, not on us folks that warn't aboard her when she run under that other boat. And as long as we keep away from the spot where the poor devils was drowned, we ain't likely to see no ha'nts."

The cook's eyes rolled tremendously.

"You thinks likely this yere is that *Marlin B.*?"

"Bah!" exclaimed one, whose name was Carney. "It's only talk. Maybe she ain't that schooner at all. Mr. Chapin says she ain't."

"Is that so?" sneered the voice of 'Rion Latham behind them. "You fellows don't want to believe what the skipper and the mate say. It ain't to their benefit for you to believe the truth. Look here!"

"What's that?" asked Carney, looking at the article Orion pushed forward in the dark. "A broken oar?"

"That's what it is. I found it only this morning in the hold, when I was helping stow the last of the cargo. It was wedged in behind a timber of her frame."

"Well? What of it?"

"Strike a match, somebody. See what's burned into that handle?"

Their heads were clustered about the faint glimmer of the match flame. But the light was sufficient to reveal what 'Rion pointed out. Burned more or less unevenly into the wood were the letters MARLIN B.

"What do you think of that?" exclaimed 'Rion. "Would that broken oar be aboard of this dratted schooner if she wasn't the *Marlin B.* painted over and a new name give her? What do you fellows think of it?"

There was silence in the group when the match flame died out. It was finally the negro cook who made comment:

"Lawsy me!" he groaned. "Ef I had only de faith of Peter I'd up an' walk ashore from dis here cussed schooner right now!"

## CHAPTER XXV.

The girl whom Cap'n Ira Ball found in the kitchen of the old house on Wreckers' Head when he hobbled out of his bedroom the next morning was not the Ida May he had been wont to find of late, ready with his shaving ma-

terials, hot water, and a clean and voluminous-checked apron to be tucked in about the neckband of his shirt.

All was in readiness as usual, but the girl herself was smileless, heavy-eyed, and slack of step. That she had suffered both in body and mind since the day before, the least observant person in the world would have easily comprehended.

"I swan, Ida May!" gasped the old man. "Whatever's happened to you?"

"I did not sleep well, Uncle Ira," she told him faintly.

"Sleep? Why, you look as though you'd been standing double watch for a week of Sundays! I never see the beat! Has that crazy gal coming here set ye all aback this way?"

"I—I am afraid so."

"'Tis a shame. I won't stand to have that gal come here again. Prudence has been starting and crying out all night, too. She's as much upset as you be. I cal'late you don't feel like shaving of me this morning, Ida May."

"Oh, yes, I do, Uncle Ira! Don't mind how I look."

"But I do mind," he grumbled. "Folks' looks is a great p'int. I've always held to it. Talk about a singed cat being better than it looks—I doubt it!"

"People of my complexion always look worse after a sleepless night," explained Sheila, trying to smile at him.

"That's a pity, too. And I feel the need of being spruced up a good deal myself this morning, Ida May," he continued. "D'you see how straggly my hair is gettin'? Do you think you could trim it a mite?"

"Why, of course I can, Uncle Ira," she rejoined cheerfully.

"I swan! You be a likely gal, Ida May," said the old man, both reflectively and gratefully. "What would Prue and me do without you? And no other girl but just you would have be-

gun to fill the bill o' lading. That's as sure as sure! See, now," he went on, with emphasis, "suppose you'd been such a one as that half-crazy critter that come here yesterday! Where'd Prudence and me been with her in the house? Well!"

"She—she may not be as bad as she seemed under those particular circumstances," Sheila said hesitatingly. "If she had come here—had come here first and you and Aunt Prue had not known me at all——"

"I swan! Don't say no more! Don't say no more, I tell ye," gasped Cap'n Ira. "It's bad luck to talk such a way; I do believe it is. Come on, Ida May. You tackle my hair and let's see what you can do with it. I know right well you'll make it look better than Prudence used to do."

Cap'n Ira was talking for effect, and the result he wished to achieve was bringing a smile to Sheila's face and a brighter light into her eyes, the violet hues of which were far more subdued than he desired. His success was not marked, but he changed to some degree the forlorn expression of the girl's countenance, so that when Prudence appeared in the midst of the operation of shaving, Sheila could greet the old woman with a tremulous smile.

"You deary-dear!" crooned Prudence, with her withered arms about the strong, young frame of the girl, drawing her close. "I know you've suffered this night. That mad girl was enough to put us all out o' kilter. But don't let any thought of her bother you, Ida May. Your uncle and I love you, and if forty people said you didn't belong here, we should keep you just the same. Ain't that so, Ira?"

"Sure is," declared the captain vigorously. "No two ways about it. We couldn't get along without Ida May, and I cal'late, the way things look, that I'd better get that high fence I spoke of built around this place at once.

We're likely to have somebody come here and carry the gal off almost any time. I can see that danger as plain as plain!"

Prudence laughed, yet there was a catch in her voice too. She kissed the girl's tear-wet face tenderly. Sheila's heart throbbed so that she could scarcely go on with the task of shaving Cap'n Ira. How could she continue to live this lie before two people who were so infinitely kind to her and who loved her so tenderly?

And the girl loved them in return. It was no selfish thought which held Sheila Macklin here in the old house on Wreckers' Head. She had put aside all concern for her own personal comfort or ease. Had it not been for her desire to shield Tunis and continue to aid and comfort Cap'n Ira and Prudence, she might quickly and quietly have left the place and thus have escaped all possibility of punishment for the deception she had practiced.

Yes, had these other considerations not been involved, she would have run away! Although she chanced to have no money just at this time, she would have left the Ball homestead and Wreckers' Head and the town itself and walked so far away that nobody who knew her would ever see her again. She had thought of doing this even as far back as the time when she was so lonely and miserable in Boston. Now, she would willingly have become a tramp for the purpose of getting out of the affliction which enmeshed her.

She could not, nevertheless, yield to this temptation. If she ran away from the Balls and Big Wreck Cove, she would tacitly admit the truth of all Ida May Bostwick's claims, and possibly involve Tunis in the wreckage. Therefore she held to her determination of keeping her place here until she was actually driven forth.

As a last resort, having now worked out the details of that plan in her mind, she believed she could save Tunis from much calumny if it became positively necessary for her to depart under this cloud and abandon her place to the real Ida May. The latter must, however, come with positive proof of her identity—evidence sufficient to convince Cap'n Ira and Prudence—before Sheila Macklin would release her grasp upon what she had obtained by trickery and deceit.

Not for a moment did the girl try to excuse to herself what she had done. In spite of the Balls' need of her, and in spite of Tunis' love, Sheila did not try to deceive herself with any sophistry about the end justifying the deed. Such thinking could not satisfy her now.

Sheila's eyes were opened. She beheld before her both the wide and the narrow way. If she took the pleasanter path, it was with a full knowledge of what she did. Yet would it be the pleasanter path? She doubted this. If she continued to fight for a place which was not hers by right, she must walk for all time in a slippery way. This claim of the real Ida May might be perennial; the girl might return again and again to the attack. For years—as long as the Balls lived and Sheila remained with them—she must be ever on the alert to defend her position with them.

And after the good old people died—what then? The property here on the Head and their money would no more belong to Sheila Macklin than it did now. She shrank in horror from the thought of swindling the real Ida May out of anything, which might legally be hers when the Balls were gone. Of course, Cap'n Ira and Prudence could will their property to whom they pleased. Still, Ida May was Prudence's niece!



# Just Between Us

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

**A**NGER shortens life. Aside from the fact that persons who are well bred and well poised permit themselves no indulgence in emotional stress of any kind, we should all heed the time-honored admonition "Let not thine angry passions rise." Psychology quite recently has placed the emotions, from a health and beauty viewpoint, on a more understandable plane.

When we are pleased the pulse is strong; when we are displeased, weak. The same holds for breathing. If an experience is pleasant, we breathe more deeply; if unpleasant, less deeply. In joy, we breathe in great breaths; in sorrow, our breathing is short and weak. In anger, we literally burn up our vitality. Each bout of anger, each rush of evil passion, cuts off a certain portion of the life we should enjoy, if it had not happened. This is explained, scientifically, as caused by an undue strain upon the ductless glands, those delicate, marvelous regulators of the body.

Aside from sapping the vitality and aging its victim, anger ruins what claim

to beauty one may possess. Nothing defiles the countenance as much as flying into a rage at trivialities. If you would keep your looks beyond their natural limit, practice self-control.

Depression is a quality which seems to be on the increase. It is fatal to health and to one's appearance. We must guard against depression, despite the vicissitudes of life. It is all too true that conditions are more harassing than ever before, but we must trim our sails to the wind. Every mail brings letters from young people attesting to the difficulties under which they are struggling and—oh, the pity of it!—their apparent lack of will power to fight life's battles. To the young person, every untoward happening in life, indeed every trifling blemish, is a tragedy. Age tempers our vicissitudes. When we have overcome many obstacles, we learn to regard our problems as character builders. However, every one knows that the imaginary ills of hysterical patients are very real to them, and so the feeling of depression, with

all its accompanying evil effects, is only too real to the sufferer, who must strive above all other things to forget self. We magnify our sorrows by dwelling upon them.

Depression has a powerfully adverse effect upon the liver, which, phrenologically, is the organ of hope. All persons who find themselves depressed should at once proceed to stimulate this gland and should practice forceful breathing in the open air.

Experience is said to be a bitter teacher. And yet every new phase of life and every experience has its use; many of these are inevitable, but every girl should be determined to use every experience as a "stepping stone to higher things." Some persons go through life with no thought as to the meaning of events and incidents which occur in their daily lives. Life is always intensely dramatic, and when we weave the apparently casual happenings of even the most simple and uneventful life into a whole, we find it a human drama. If we profit by every experience, we are never visited by the slough of despond.

Joviality, the power of enjoyment, comes from a uniformly cheerful, optimistic temperament. Never has the need of good cheer been greater. Joviality is a faculty capable of growth. It is not true that the sources of pleasure are rare and few, but it is sadly true that we pass them unnoticed.

"Laugh and the world laughs with you," or "Laugh and grow fat," whichever you wish! That is an axiom for persons characterized by depression to bear in mind. Depression is a weed which saps the vitality, while laughter is a recognized tonic. Once we can laugh at our disappointments, that particular grievance takes wings and flies away, leaving us calm and unruffled to face the next. There is much wisdom

in the business man's enjoyment of light comedy. The man who enjoys hearty laughter every day will be young at eighty, and a woman possessing a sense of humor keeps her comeliness to the end. So, laugh and grow young.

Beauty is as beauty does. Every one can be beautiful. It is a matter of cultivation. To begin with, the highest form of beauty is beauty of expression. That indescribable something called "charm" and "fascination" is but the natural courtesy of a gracious spirit. This is attained by the possession of inward graces which frequently transform a so-called plain face into one more beautiful and winning than the combination of a perfect complexion and regular features. Beauty of face alone does not constitute all there is of this much-desired, much-envied quality. The art of looking pleasant and the art of looking agreeable, if persistently cultivated, will last a lifetime and will, in the last analysis, far outweigh mere prettiness of face.

Beautiful women and handsome men are frequently selfish and intensely self-indulgent. The beauty is seldom happy without her little court and demands or longs for continual admiration. When deprived of this she fancies herself basely used, sulks, and mopes until her very beauty is in danger of destruction. The beauty which is unconscious of its own charm dispenses a true warmth to all who come within its radiance. The girl who takes her beauty assets as a matter of course, who does not employ them as a means to an end, who strives to improve herself, who sees beauty in others, who yields to generous impulses and seeks the happiness of those around her, is possessed of true beauty.

Kindness! Are you acquainted with Robert Louis Stevenson's remarks on kindness? No? Then look them up,



memorize every word, and you will forever agree with him that without kind words, kind thoughts, kind letters, life would indeed be a sorry jest. We are in danger of neglecting the small things that make life worth while. Consideration for others, kindness, is the keynote of good breeding. In the rush of everyday existence we neglect or overlook a thousand little opportunities to make others happy. A kind word, a smile, a little act of courtesy linger in the memory and make the day beautiful for some one. So dispense kindness and, in doing so, you will add infinitely to your own happiness, and what is even of more value, you will unconsciously develop spiritual beauty.

Manners are a magic wand which opens every door. Business opportunities, social advancements, friendships, success, everything in life succumbs to charm of manner. Can it be cultivated? Decidedly, yet it springs from a true, inward goodness of heart. The veneer masquerading as fine manners is soon brushed off; it cannot stand up under the searchlight of truth. Often one sees a person, especially a young woman, nervously anxious to commit no solecism, to be extremely "correct," but good sense and character usually come to her rescue as the occasion arises. The good sense and character, of course, must be there first.

To cultivate a gracious manner you must be willing to admit your lack of it. That is a long step in the right direction. After that you will strive to overcome indifference, coldness, snobbishness, and all uncharitableness. Then opportunities and the greatest gift of all—love—will seek you.

Poise is the most essential quality of the well-bred woman, and this, by the way, is nothing more or less than a serene tranquillity of mind. It "leaves hurry to slaves," hurry of either speech

or deed. Persons characterized by poise immediately attract our attention, regardless of face, form, feature, or clothing. The bearing of such persons is noticeably striking; their calm assurance speaks of an inner grasp upon themselves which nothing can shake. Do not forget that they are absolutely unconscious of self. It is the tactlessness, the instability, the "freshness" of the modern girl, which gives one the impression that she is entirely devoid of this.

Quality! There is a peculiar sameness about the girl of the period. Be she a lady of quality or a maid, when at play it is really quite impossible to differentiate; for the lady has submerged her quality in the slang and general frivolities of the moment. The tendency of the times for all to think alike, look alike, dress alike, and adopt like amusements, is a bit disconcerting; however, quality, like blood, will tell in a crisis.

Restlessness is in the air. It is undoubtedly at the bottom of the overwhelming similarity in type. Jazz, dazzling moving objects, blatant colors, flaring posters, noise and more noise, are trying our nervous systems beyond endurance. To give our eyes and ears a change from the ceaseless vibratory sensations, we must slow down occasionally, before nervous exhaustion overtakes us.

Simplicity, as a quality, has no rival. We may not be aware of it, but nothing appeals to our inner natures as surely as unaffected simplicity, and because of this, the reaction from the excessive strain under which most of us are living will in all likelihood tend to a return of the simple things in life. Persons who are wise are already beginning to follow the advocates of a simple diet, for instance.

Teeth are degenerating. It is believed, however, that with a return to



hard foods, in place of sweets, white flours, paps, and the like, the teeth of the coming generation will be stronger. Many ailments are being traced not only to defective teeth, but to the secretions of the mouth, the underlying cause of which is incipient gum trouble. To maintain perfect health, the teeth and gums must be guarded. Soft gums should be treated with a rubber finger stall—which is made expressly for this purpose—and tincture of myrrh.

*Chic*, in French, covers all that has been said before on beauty and much more. The Frenchwomen cannot be called beautiful from our standards of beauty; but they possess this characteristic which is an embodiment of everything that goes to make the general appearance perfect to the eye. The French cannot lay claim to the beauty of the Englishwomen, for instance, whose complexions are unrivaled. Nor to the American girl's "figure" and delightful air of freedom and independence. But from the grand dame down to the poorest model, the Frenchwomen display *chic*, which it would be well for us all to acquire—a striving after perfection. How best to dress one's hair; what cosmetics suit one's special coloring; what is one's style; then absolute grooming of the body and the wardrobe, the blending of all this with entire unconsciousness of the studied effect, comprises *chic*.

Ugliness can really be made an asset. Every one will recall the French comédienne, Polaire, who won fame by accentuating her ugly features. The homely girl usually devotes far more painstaking care to her appearance and to the cultivation of her mind than the girl who is endowed with mere physical beauty.

Individuality does not mean egotism; it should mean a distinctive personality. There is a tendency on the part of some

persons to cultivate individuality to such an extent that they rejoice in their own little peculiarities and criticize other persons for not possessing them. Individuality may be carried to extremes in accent, manner, dress, et cetera. This is of course ridiculous, but we should nevertheless develop our individuality sufficiently to have a distinct manner of our own—one in keeping with our personality and circumstances, and, above all, we should aim to have our own convictions.

The figure, that is, the perfect figure, must harmonize in all its lines to please the truly aesthetic. The chief components of true beauty in the female form are order and proportion, but we rarely see a figure perfectly molded, therefore most of us must strive to make up in other ways what we lack in perfection of form.

How, for instance, do you hold yourself? A distinguished carriage is perhaps the greatest asset a woman can have. It is more than beauty. It counts more than fine clothes, for fine clothes worn by a woman of uncertain presence lose their effect. There was a time when girls were taught how to carry themselves, how to walk. Why not? Even in this hectic age it would be well for girls to lay aside their slipshod ways and take time to practice before a mirror, with a book upon the head, to acquire poise, up and down, up and down, until, by force of habit, they attain a graceful bearing.

Good health rules to follow:

First: spend as much time outdoors as possible. Bask much in the sun and take plenty of exercise. Take care that your respiration is always deep and regular.

Second: eat meat only once a day, and let your diet be eggs, cereals, vegetables, fruits, and fresh milk. Take as much milk as possible. Masticate your food carefully.

Third: take a hot bath every day and a steam bath once or twice a week, if the heart is strong enough to bear it.

Fourth: early to bed and early to rise.

Fifth: sleep in a very dark and a very quiet room, with windows open. Let the minimum of sleeping hours be six or six and a half hours. In the case of women, eight and a half hours are advisable.

Sixth: take one day of absolute rest each week, in which you refrain from even reading or writing.

Seventh: try to avoid any outbursts of passion and strong mental stimulations. Do not tax your brain about the occurrence of inevitable incidents or coming events. Do not say unpleasant things, nor listen, if possible to avoid it, to disagreeable things.

Habits may be good or bad, but every one should cultivate the habit of self-improvement. Carelessness of speech has been called one of the besetting sins of our nation. It is amazing to listen to the chatter of young people. It is appallingly unintelligible to some of the old people who have failed to keep up with the times! We Americans are not only sadly deficient in our own language, but are opposed to acquiring even a rudimentary knowledge of any other language. It would be a capital thing to form the habit of reading one chapter of an English classic each day.

Neatness, or if you will, tidiness, is one of the most attractive of feminine qualities. She who is not born with the bump of neatness well developed has a hard time acquiring it. Most of us never do. Early and persistent training is needful to establish habits of neatness. There is absolutely nothing so fatal to girlish beauty as slovenliness of one's surroundings.

The girl who desires a reputation for daintiness must begin with her own room. No matter how small and un-

attractive the space may be, she who is ambitious for hours of privacy and seclusion, which should be every one's privilege, can, at little expense, transform the ugliest room into "a thing of beauty and a joy forever." Such a room will reflect on its owner. And, above all, she must see to it that the room and its fittings express herself.

Wardrobe! One's particular wardrobe is always a source of interest, and to women with no "dress sense," a matter of real concern. The gospel of clothes should be taught every girl, for it is only ignorant girls who assume that a proper interest in clothes and a love for the beautiful in apparel must mean extravagance. Every girl wants to "look nice." In trying, she frequently falls in lamentable errors, because of her utter lack of the fitness of things. The working girl is most attractive in a simple skirt and coat, small hat, and common-sense shoes.

Simplicity of dress, neatness, and cleanliness mark the efficient business girl—or for that matter, the sensible woman in any walk of life.

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#### WHAT READERS ASK

MRS. K. G.—Yes, I unqualifiedly condemn the use of hair dyes. The preparation of sage, tar, and iron, which I so often mention, will restore the hair to its original color if properly applied. This does not include sunburned or blond hair. It will give me pleasure to send you full directions for making this tonic, if you desire it.

ALICE V.—The character of your flesh may be due to anemia. Have you seen my recent articles on this subject? If not, I advise you to look them up. Read them carefully, and follow the treatment outlined. A suitable dietary, outdoor breathing exercises, and a daily walk of two or more miles in all weathers, is advised. The iron tonic in powder form, already referred to, is indicated in your condition. Shall I write you about it?

MRS. ERON T.—It is a well-established, scientific fact that a woman's hair does not grow to any appreciable extent after the age of

thirty-five. There are exceptions, no doubt. This unpleasant truth is only now becoming known and it is a pity that all women cannot be told, as they would then exercise greater care in the use of hot tongs and other measures that ultimately lead to the complete ruin of this necessary and attractive feature. Upon proper request, I will send formula for a splendid hair tonic.

**Tired Business Woman.**—Yes, I not only believe, but I know that any woman can so improve her appearance as to look twenty years younger than her actual age. For this it is of course necessary that she carry out persistently and consistently such hygienic measures as will induce a high degree of health, and then, in addition, splendid grooming of the body. Write me privately as to your specific needs and I will gladly help you.

**Miss R. H.**—Superfluous hair is the bane of many a middle-aged woman's existence. Under no circumstances allow this blemish to get the better of you. Take it in time. Depilatories are worse than useless. Upon receipt of stamped, addressed envelope, I will put you in touch with two methods of treatment.

**H. W.**—I do not advocate the use of hair dyes, but will gladly send you directions for a sage, tar, and iron restorer for gray hair, which has proved its value to many.

**Barry G.**—Vertigo is not a disease. It is a symptom of many conditions, and, as we always think of the commonest first, I would suggest stomach troubles or eyestrain, or both. Stomach troubles are now being combated marvelously by organotherapy, or treatment with animal glands. If you are particularly interested in this, write me further, inclosing stamped, self-addressed envelope for personal reply.

**Genevieve K.**—Your dusky skin and the brown discolorations around the mouth and eyes are due to sluggish liver. The liver is a wonderful gland. The work it does is very little understood by the layman. We should give much more attention than we do to the hygiene of the liver. If you care to know of an effective treatment, I will very gladly tell you how to proceed.

**Margaretta.**—When symptoms arising from inactivity of that marvelous gland—the liver—are not heeded, gall stones frequently result. Read what has just been said to Genevieve K. You have no symptoms of gall-stone colic, but the extreme discomfort,

indigestion, bilious attacks, and what not, point to this organ.

**Mary Jane.**—The first indication of frost-bite, after exposure to cold, is intense itching. Then the parts become swollen and very red. This often occurs upon the ears, if unprotected, the cheeks, tip of the nose, the fingers, and toes. The immediate treatment is not warmth, as so many persons suppose, but cold. Rub the parts with snow or ice. Under no circumstances should the tissues be thawed out before a fire. After the cold has been applied with friction for some time—that is, until the circulation has been restored—warm, not hot, water may be applied. This relieves the itching. A good remedy for chilblains consists of: Castor oil, oil of turpentine, flexible collodion, equal parts of each. Apply two or three times daily.

**Mrs. Smith.**—You feel the cold, in all probability, because your blood is not sufficiently oxygenated, and does not contain a sufficient number of red-blood corpuscles. I would suggest a two-mile walk daily, and the faithful employment of an iron- tonic food in powder form. I can give you the name of this remedy only by private mail. I also suggest breathing exercises and foods containing a large content of iron. Concerning all this I shall be happy to inform you, if you address me for private reply.

**Distressed.**—Smallpox pits and scars can be treated at home, but not as successfully as by a professional; such treatments are expensive. It will do no harm to see what you can do, so send to me for directions. Also for detailed treatment for acne.

**Mrs. Elizabeth B.**—In a recent article on obesity, the condition of which you complain, "largeness through the abdomen and hips," was thoroughly discussed. I suggest that you send for a copy of the magazine containing the article. You will find it very helpful. If you care to address me for a private reply, I will gladly suggest remedies and exercises which will prove valuable. Be sure to inclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

**Mrs. A. W. O.**—When information is asked on matters that cannot be published, a self-addressed, stamped envelope to insure private reply must accompany the request. I cannot give you, in this column, the names of the chemists who make up the French ointment for devitalizing superfluous hair, but will gladly mail it to you.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

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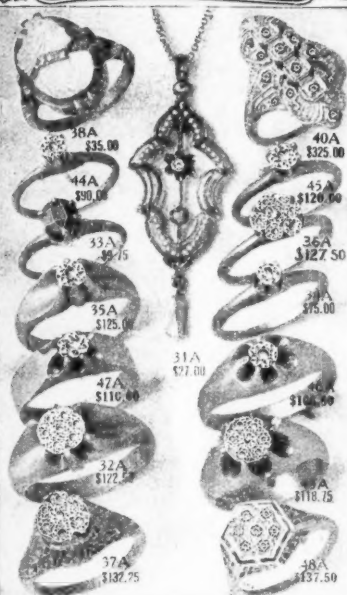
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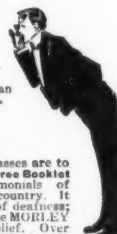
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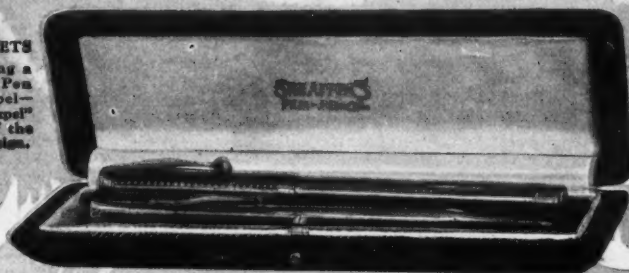
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